Vol. XIII. No. 4 SPRING, 1946

SCRUTINY

A Quarterly Review

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MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING

NOTES FROM A BOOK IN PREPARATION

. . . . . It will be remembered that Coleridge chose *Much Ado* as an illustration of his famous 'fourth distinguishing characteristic' of Shakespeare, in accordance with which 'the interest in the plot' in the latter's plays 'is always in fact on account of the characters, not *vice-versa* . . . the plot is a mere canvass and no more'. And he went on to exemplify: 'Take away from *Much Ado* . . . all that which is not indispensable to the plot, either as having little to do with it, or, at best, like Dogberry and his comrades forced into the service, when any other less ingeniously absurd watchmen and night-constables would have answered the mere necessities of the action;—take away Benedick, Beatrice, Dogberry, and the reaction of the former on the character of Hero,—and what remains?' The implication is nothing, or almost nothing; so that the play as a whole has no purpose—that it has no unity and, failing to show even a thwarted striving towards unity, is most conveniently for the critic resolved into its elements.

As Coleridge's sharp distinction between plot and character would now no longer be accepted, it becomes at least possible that his judgment on *Much Ado* should be modified—perhaps, indeed, reversed. Antecendently, this would seem probable; for whatever they have said or written, post-Coleridgeans have not, perhaps, ceased to enjoy the play as a whole: at least they have not been reduced to reading it as some of Dickens's novels are read, with a methodical skipping of scenes or chapters. Are they not to be held more justified in their practice than in their theory? The best way to attack this problem is perhaps to consider one by one the elements which Coleridge claims to have isolated from the plot and from each other, asking whether in fact they can be so isolated: whether they or the plot do not succumb to the operation or, if they survive it, whether they are not maimed thereby.

And first of Dogberry: though with regard to him, it is indeed difficult to maintain the detachment desirable in an analysis. Let us begin however by noting that, though he and his fellows are at times styled malaprops, the term is not altogether happy. Mrs. Malaprop is not a character who, on a second reading of *The Rivals*, gives any great if indeed any pleasure; for her pride in 'the derangement of epitaphs' is a foolish pride that the reader, for discretion's sake, prefers to ignore. Mrs. Quickly of *The Merry Wives*, with her 'alligant' and 'alicholy', has perhaps some-

thing of the same pride—though having other things too, she does not prove quite so embarrassing on continued acquaintance; and in any case, rather than painfully aping, she is probably lazily echoing her superiors. As for the Mrs. Quickly of the historical plays, she is another person: with her 'Arthur's bosom', she gives expression, as best she may, not to a selfish foolishness but to a charitable concern for souls—at least, for one soul; arriving in a moment of illumination, or perhaps at the end of a train of thought, at a striking conclusion about the state of the blessed.

Dogberry and his fellows, of from time to time the victims of syllables like Mrs. Malaprop, are more frequently and more significantly, like the second Mrs. Quickly, the victims of ideas. When Verges speaks of 'suffering salvation body and soul', and Dogberry of being 'condemned into everlasting redemption', it is impossible they are being deceived merely by similitude of sounds. Rather, they are being confounded by ideas with which, though unfitted to do so, they feel it incumbent upon themselves to cope. Such utterances are of a piece with Dogberry's method of counting; with his preposterous examination of Conrad and Borachio, in which condemnation precedes questioning; with his farewell of Leonato, to whom, in an endeavour to conserve both their dignities, he 'humbly gives leave to depart'; with his desire 'to be written down an ass', in which the same sense of his own dignity is in conflict with, among other things, a sense that it needs vindication. It is not Mrs. Malaprop, but rather Bottom, who comes to mind here: Bottom who, like Dogberry, is torn between conflicting impulses—whether those of producing his interlude in as splendid a manner as possible, while at the same time showing as much deference as possible to the ladies; or of claiming as his own the 'most rare vision' which, as a vision, certainly had been his, while for its rarity it seemed such as could not rightly belong to any man.

In thus addressing themselves to intellectual or moral feats of which they are not capable, Bottom, Mrs. Quickly and Dogberry do of course display a form of pride. Given his attitude towards Verges:

> 'a good old man, sir, hee will be talking as they say, when the age is in, the wit is out, God helpe us, it is a world to see . . . '

Dogberry's pride needs no stressing. It is however no longer a foolish pride; or if foolish, then not with the folly of Mrs. Malaprop, but rather of all the protagonists of drama, comic or tragic, who measure themselves against tasks which ultimately prove too much for them. Perhaps with justice it is to be classified as a form of *hybris*, a comic *hybris*; and if so, then some kind of essential relation between the Dogberry scenes and the tragically inclined scenes of the main plot is immediately suggested.

The suggestion is strengthened, once Dogberry's strength rather than his weakness, his triumphs rather than his failures, are considered. For he has established himself as Constable of Messina, not only to the content of his subordinates, but with the tolerance

of his superiors. In this respect he is no longer to be compared with Bottom—who, it is to be feared, would never gain a firm footing, however humble, at the court of Theseus—but with Falstaff, a character of greater importance. Unlike Bottom, Dogberry and his companions have taken fairly accurate measure both of themselves and of those who surround them; so that, if swayed by *hybris* in a certain degree, they take care that this degree shall fall short of destructive. For example, they are quite clear 'what belongs to a Watch': they will 'sleep rather than talk'; rather than bid a man stand against his will, they will let him go and thank God they are rid of a knave; rather than take a thief, they will 'let him shew himselfe for what he is', and steal out of their company. In short, they will exert themselves, or fight, no longer than they see reason: to adapt Poins's words. Indeed, in this matter they are more consistent than Falstaff, who, in dismissing Prince Henry as 'a Fellow, that never had the Ache in his shoulders', is for once allowing himself to be puffed up by *hybris*. In his boasts to Shallow, Falstaff betrays not a little of a Bottom-like recklessness:

> 'Master *Robert Shallow*, choose what Office thou wilt in the Land, 'tis thine . . . Boote, boote, Master *Shallow*, I know the young King is sick for mee . . . '

And discomfiture of course follows. Whereas Dogberry has perfectly accommodated himself to those on whom he depends, making their ideals his own. His list of qualifications is revealing:

> 'I am a wise fellow, and which is more, an officer, a householder, and which is more, as pretty a peece of flesh as any in Messina, and one that knowes the Law, goe to, and a rich fellow enough, goe to, and a fellow that hath had losses, and that hath two gownes, and everything handsome about him'.

It needs little acquaintance with the Leonato circle to realize that for them too it is a principal concern that everything, as far as possible, shall remain 'handsome about them'.

The few adjectives we have had occasion to apply to Claudio—prim and shallow—suggest this; and so far, we have not studied Claudio with any closeness. Nor has the time yet come to do so; we can however note how everything about his wooing confirms the propriety of adjectives of this kind. His leaving, not only the wooing of Hero, but the falling in love with her until circumstances are convenient, and

> . . . warre-thoughts
> Have left their places vacant;

his abandoning that love once it appears the Prince contemplates asserting an opposing claim; his preliminary enquiry

> Hath Leonato any sonne my Lord?
> No childe but Hero, she's his onely heire,

and so on: his conduct is of a piece—is conduct, we may add, fitting for a 'Count Comfect', as Beatrice calls him; conduct directed in the first place to the setting up and the keeping up of appearances. Yet it is conduct that, recommending itself to Leonato, earns his emphatic approval. For though he arrogates to himself a merit for forgiving Claudio for an insult which, as yet, everyone assumes to have had fatal consequences, he is careful not to exaggerate this merit. In his eyes, it does not justify him in offering, as a pledge of forgiveness, the hand of a niece whom he has not previously declared to be, not only as beautiful, but as rich as Hero. Indeed, she is richer:

> . . . My brother hath a daughter . . .
> And she alone is heire to both of us.

Marrying off the young before they have time to get into mischief, and so ruin appearances—

> 'Wisedome and bloud combating in so tender a body, we have ten proofes to one, that bloud hath the victory . . .'

taking care to do so however in such a way that fortune shall not be impaired, social position shall be safeguarded; this would seem to be the prime occupation of society in Messina. Obviously, it is an important occupation; but equally obviously, it has no claims to be considered as unique. To fill up the gap, war is allowed of as a diversion for males and, for both the sexes, games and small talk. Thus, though not active about things of great importance nor, it would appear, importantly active about anything, society in Messina manages to keep up the appearance of great activity.

Such a society has the merit of being a society, that is, a more or less stable organization of human beings for common ends; and *ex hypothesi*, it is charming on the surface. For appearances lie on the surface. Yet for that reason they may be hollow; and there is a danger that faculties, exercised exclusively on appearances, may incapacitate themselves for dealing with, or even for recognizing, substance, when on occasion this presents itself. Something of the kind would seem to have happened to Pedro, Leonato, Claudio and their like; who when faced with the substance of Hero's grief, display an incompetence as great as that of any Dogberry; give rein to a *hybris* which is, perhaps, greater. For it is inconceivable that any but the most pampered and therefore the most spoilt members of a society should, in circumstances of such distress, show themselves as immune as they do from self-questioning, as free from misgiving. *Hybris* on this scale is of course tragic; but, it may be suggested, *hybris* on this scale is also ridiculous—indeed, unless the ridiculous aspect is first acknowledged, the tragic may escape acknowledgment altogether. For human vanity alone constitutes a strong temptation to discount it as preposterous. The figures of Dogberry and his kind are necessary in the background, to reduce the figures in the foreground to the required proportions—to the proportions of apes (as Isabella says,

in *Measure for Measure*), apes for whom no tricks are too ferocious, too fantastic. Coleridge's isolation of Dogberry from the main plot is perhaps the effective reason for his dismissal of that plot as a 'mere canvass'; and if so, this of itself suggests that the isolation is not to be justified. But there is the further point: because of the same isolation, Coleridge dismisses Dogberry as 'ingeniously absurd'. Undoubtedly he is: but also, he is relevantly absurd—relevantly absurd to the main plot, and to life such as the main plot renders it. And finally, Dogberry is relevant not only for his absurdity, but for the limitations placed on this absurdity by his persistent if purblind prudence, but the steady if myopic eye which he keeps fixed on appearances—on his office as constable, on his comfort, on the main chance. This immediately establishes his commensurability with the figures of the main plot; who like him, take care not to prejudice what is comfort in their eyes.

Having perhaps established this point, we may allow ourselves to go even further than Coleridge in separating Dogberry and the rest from what he called the 'mere necessities of the action'. 'Any other watchmen', he says, 'would have served the latter equally well'; whereas now it would seem clear that, in all probability, they would have served it better. Few if any other watchmen would have taken stock of themselves as frankly as Dogberry; they would not therefore appear guilty of an inconsistency, as Dogberry's assistants seem to be, in arresting the swashbucklers Conrad and Borachio. For they have just declared an intention to attempt no such thing. Or perhaps this inconsistency is due, not to the watchmen, but to the swashbucklers; who indeed, from this point in the play onwards, show a remarkable meekness. But the matter is hardly worth discussing; nor, perhaps, whether the carelessness involved on the author's part is to be described as positive or negative.

We must pass on to a consideration of the scenes presenting Benedick and Beatrice. And these, I think we shall find, not only lose in significance in being separated from the rest of the play but, as a single element, dissolve. If relations can be established between some of these scenes and some of the rest, not all can be related to the same scenes; with the result that they cannot all be related amongst themselves. In other words, they would appear to be inconsistent with one another; and this is perhaps most readily evident in the most famous of them all, the eavesdropping scenes.

If, for example, we consider that in which Beatrice eavesdrops upon Hero and Ursula, we find her described as 'coy and wilde, As Haggerds of the rocke'; as 'so odde, and from all fashion' that she 'cannot be commendable'; as, in short, another Katharina from *The Taming of the Shrew*. Like Katharina, she is unscrupulous in the methods she adopts to keep the other sex at distance:

> . . . I never yet saw man,
> How wise, how noble, yong, how rarely featur'd.

> But she would spell him backward . . .
> So turnes she every man the wrong side out,
> And never gives to Truth and Vertue, that
> Which simplenesse and merit purchaseth.

Lest it should be thought that Hero is knowingly giving a false report, seizing the opportunity, once she feels safe from her cousin's tongue, to return mock for mock—a proceeding which, however, would not be in accordance with Hero's submissive or (to repeat the adjective) shallow nature—Beatrice herself takes occasion to confirm it. Once the stage is empty, she steps forward and soliloquizes in verse flatter than any of Katharina's:

> What fire is in mine eares? can this be true?
> Stand I condemn'd for pride and scorne so much?
> Contempt, farewell, and maiden pride, adew,
> No glory lives behind the backe of such.
> And *Benedicke*, love one, I will requite thee,
> Taming my wilde heart to thy loving hand . . .

Beatrice, in other words, confesses she has hitherto been as savage as an Amazon; in future, she will be as patient as Grizzel.

Now whatever else she may be, Beatrice in other scenes is hardly as ingenuous as this; nor is she *farouche*. Rather than restive in society to which men as well as women are admitted, she shows herself mistress of its minor arts, and delighting in her mastery. Perhaps the best illustration is the scene in which the engagement of Claudio and Hero is announced. It is not Beatrice but Hero who, with her unnatural submissiveness, shows embarrassment; to relieve which Beatrice draws attention to herself, assuming the rôle conventionally assigned to spinsters on such occasions:

> 'Good Lord for alliance: thus goes every one to the world but I, and I am sun-burn'd, I may sit in a corner to cry, heigh ho for a husband'.

Taking his cue the Prince, who also is a master of the social arts, proposes himself as a husband, and the little comedy, thus started, is played out successfully to the end. Beatrice maintains a befittingly humorous tone; and lest she should have overstepped propriety in provoking, even in jest, an offer from the Prince, includes a gesture of respect towards him:

> 'Will you have me? Lady
> 'No, my Lord, unlesse I might have another for working daies, your Grace is too costly to weare every day: but I beseech your Grace pardon mee, I was borne to speake all mirth, and no matter'.

Nevertheless, when the Prince addresses her too patronizingly, presuming on the intimacy which collaboration for social ends has temporarily established between them, without hesitation she administers a rebuke:

> '. . . out of question, you were borne in a merry houre.
> 'No sure my Lord, my Mother cried, but then there was a starre daunst, and under that I was borne: cosins God give you joy'.

And so she withdraws, the honours going with her.

Almost immediately afterwards the Prince observes: 'She cannot indure to heare tell of a husband', and Leonato continues: 'O by no meanes, she mockes all her wooers out of suite'. Yet it should be noted that, in the play, we are not shown Beatrice as indiscriminately scolding males. That is what, according to Hero, she should do; but what in fact she does—leaving out of account for the moment her attitude towards Benedick—is to scold the male sex in general. And there is a difference between the two, for a general condemnation has none of the force of successive condemnations of individuals. In Beatrice's case indeed, the generalities would not seem to be intended as forceful but feigned, and to be taken as feigned:

> 'Well neece, I hope to see you one day fitted with a husband.
> 'Not till God make men of some other metall than earth, would it not greeve a woman to be over-mastred with a peece of valiant dust? to make account of her life to a clod of waiward marle? no unckle ile none: *Adams* sonnes are my brethren, and truly I hold it a sinne to match in my kinred'.

She alleges no private grievance, maintains no argument, but jumps from one commonplace to another—all of which many other persons have uttered many times before, and in similar contexts. Indeed, rather than expressing any feeling of her own, Beatrice once more may be assuming a conventional rôle, such as is approved of and perhaps required by society in certain circumstances.

At this point a comparison with Benedick may be instructive. For as Beatrice of the male, so Benedick is a 'professed tyrant' of the female sex, and on grounds of a similar nature. He alleges the faithlessness and extravagance of women, which in society are commonplaces approved of for certain purposes. Benedick's in propounding them would seem to be sufficiently obvious. As has been noted, Messina is a match-making society; in which, if a bachelor is to preserve himself from troublesome pursuit, he is in need of a weapon. The weapon conventionally allowed him is an affected misogyny, or the prolongation, beyond the days of adolescence, of an adolescent cynicism with regard to women. This is the weapon wielded by Claudio—*teste* Benedick—before turning his thoughts to Hero; it is the one to which he returns as the most natural thing in the world, once it appears that Hero is not for him. The case of Beatrice, of course, is not exactly similar: for if, in the society of Messina, an unmarried young man is somewhat of a phenomenon, much more so is an unmarried young woman. Normally, young women need no weapons for their defence, being defended by those of their family; behind which they cower until

summoned forth to accept the husband already provided for them—making curtsey, in Beatrice's words, and saying: 'as it please you, father'. Now for some reason or other—not difficult to divine, but it would hardly be in place to do so here—Beatrice is already 'out' in the world, without provision of a husband as yet. In the absence of feminine precedents, she could do no better than what she very sensibly does do: follow masculine example, and answer to their affected misogyny with the affectation of misandry.

Of which, of course, her attacks on Benedick are by no means to be taken as expressions. It would be as great a mistake to transfer to him Beatrice's amused if contemptuous toleration of the male sex as a whole—

> '. . . away to S. *Peter* . . . hee shewes mee where the Batchellers sit, and there live wee as merry as the day is long'

—as it is for Hero to transfer to the sex as a whole her *animus* against Benedick. For that there is such *animus* would seem to be clear. The blows dealt by Beatrice are as persistent and as heavy as those dealt by Katharina, though their instrument is the tongue rather than three-legged stools; though too they are not random blows. Beatrice is accurately aware which person she intends to hit, and of the weak points in that person's armour: her eye is sharp, her hand steady and her aim, therefore, sure. As a consequence, she rouses Benedick to a frenzy:

> 'O she misusde me past the indurance of a block . . . she speakes poynyards, and every word stabbes: if her breath were as terrible as her terminations, there would be no living neere her, she would infect to the north starre . . . while she is neere, a man may live as quiet in hell, as in a sanctuary, and people sinne upon purpose, because they would goe thither, so indeed all disquiet, horror and perturbation followes her'.

The taunt which appears to anger Benedick most is that he is the Prince's jester: not so much that he is a poor jester, 'duller than a great thaw', as that he is an official one. Among his duties are included that of jesting continually, whether by fair means or foul, and consequently that of accepting whatever reward the Prince and his friends think fit—be it applause, or be it a beating. The office is certainly not of the noblest; yet the very exaggeration of the charge, one would think, should prevent it from being taken seriously. Benedick, however, does so, finding it necessary to reassure himself: 'I am not so reputed'.

If we add to this, the fact that Benedick is, after all, taken as a kind of jester by his companions—the Prince and Claudio, for example, seek him out when they are 'high proofe melancholly, and would faine have it beaten away'; when we add too that Beatrice herself, the author of the charge, is in the Prince's eyes (though not, as we have noted, in her own) no more than a 'merry heart', we are faced with an interesting problem. Why are they,

both of them, in a high degree susceptible about a practice in which they indulge persistently and, to all appearances, deliberately? How has one of them become so accurately aware of the susceptibility of the other?

At least part of the truth would seem to be that the affectations of misogyny and misandry, diligently maintained by Benedick and Beatrice for a single end, is approved for many other ends by the people among whom they move—if not, indeed, approved absolutely. Perhaps in no other way does the society of Messina define—and condemn—itself so clearly, as in the frank delight and relief it finds in retreating, as soon as possible, into the irresponsibilities of adolescence. Once the indispensable match is made, fortunes and position secured and the family perpetuated, the married state and the affections on which it is supposed to be based and which it fosters have little if any further interest for them. If they can, they would continue being 'March chicks' well into December. Now, if Benedick and Beatrice are not of this mind—and if this is not already apparent, let us assume for the moment that they are not—they may well feel themselves degraded in being compelled, for a purpose of their own, to appear to encourage it; and any mention of that encouragement will touch them on the raw.

Why then—the further question arises—does this purpose seem to them so immensely important as to justify the degradation? Why are they so intent, against the example of their fellows and the precept of nature, on remaining single? Of the many possible answers, it is necessary to take account only of that which they themselves suggest. They wish to preserve themselves free from entanglements so that, should the opportunity of marrying each other present itself, it may be seized; for according not only to their actions—which might be misintrepreted—but their express declarations, they are in love with each other. The relevant words of Benedick are, not so much his praise of Beatrice's beauty when Claudio would have him praise Hero, as his exclamation, in the very height of his frenzy against Beatrice, 'I would not marry her'. As yet, no one has suggested that he should; so that the suggestion is all his own. And to a quip of the Prince's, to the effect that she has 'lost the heart of Signior *Benedick*', Beatrice answers:

> 'Indeed my Lorde, he lent it me awhile, and I gave him use for it, a double heart for a single one, marry once before he wonne it of mee, with false dice, therefore you may well say I have lost it'.

The reply has an unexpected seriousness, lost of course on the Prince. At some previous period, the two would seem to have arrived at an understanding—perhaps they were engaged, and if so, that would explain why Beatrice is 'out'. There was a rupture, due it would seem to Benedick; which neither however can bear to take as final. So Beatrice chooses to remain 'out', in order that all contact between them may not be lost. Yet what kind of

contact can they have in Messina, where discussion of serious matters is taboo? To mark their preoccupation with each other, they can only impart an unusual violence to the vapid cynicisms in which, henceforward, they must converse. Unless indeed, and until, a gust of tragedy should blow through the air of Messina, dispelling vapidities for a while.

Yet their violence should confine itself within certain limits—the limits, for example, which decency imposes. These Beatrice seems to overstep in reproaching Benedick for humiliating himself to a jester: it is a humiliation he endures, which she knows he endures, and which he knows she knows he endures, for her sake. To him she appears to touch the depth of ingratitude; and therefore, 'though bitter', he cries, she is also 'base'.

The examination of this part of the play is dragging somewhat; though perhaps this may be justified, at least in part, by its obscurity. In any case, before taking a further step forward we should perhaps take one backward, and note how all said above of the inconsistency between the Beatrice of the eavesdropping and of the other scenes is to be repeated, almost *totidem verbis*, of the Benedick. To return for a moment to bibliography, this is the more interesting in that the conversation overheard by Benedick is in prose. Further, it is more carefully written than that overheard by Beatrice, and richer in content: the Prince, unlike Hero, seizes the occasion to twit his eavesdropper; and some attempt is made to hide the ingenuousness of the latter. The excuses proffered by Benedick for walking into the trap—'the world must be peopled', and so on—do, however humorous, make it appear that he is aware of the trap: that he is walking into it with his eyes wide, or at any rate, half open. Yet this is not so; or if so, then his eyes, opened for a moment, are immediately and tightly seeled. Out of Beatrice's plain and forbidding words, 'Against my will I am sent to bid you come in to dinner', he spells a welcome and a self-surrender as painfully, and with as little plausibility, as ever Malvolio did out of MOAI.

What then is to be thought of the eavesdropping scenes? To ask whether the events on which they are based are probable or possible might lead to endless argument, and it will perhaps be sufficient to ask whether they are necessary. Two people torn apart by a misunderstanding which has begun to appear progressively less important, while the consequences it has already brought and still threatens come to appear very important indeed; two people kept apart by conventions, or a respect for appearances, which forbid the misunderstanding being discussed or even mentioned, other than allusively: what further can be needed to bring these people together, than that the conventions should reveal themselves, glaringly and publicly, for what they are?—for conventions, that is, which if they may procure human happiness up to a certain point, once that point is passed may not only cease to procure, but effectively prevent it. The conventions do so, of course, in the scene in which Hero is

repudiated: Hero of all persons, who more than any has bowed to conventions, yet who on that account is treated only with the greater cruelty. Discussion of her supposed offence is even less to be permitted, than was a discussion of Benedick's; and unlike Benedick—she is the weaker, but also, it is to be presumed, the blow which she receives is the heavier—she has no defence, and crumples. What more probable, natural, and in accord with the whole purpose of the play—if we are not mistaken in our reading of this—than that the apparently lifeless body of Hero should rouse Benedick and Beatrice to the courage of the conviction which has formed within them, that life has something to offer, too valuable for its seizure to be delayed on pretexts of doubtful moment? And the observance of the conventions, which hitherto has been their pretext, has shown itself to be of less moment than ever they suspected or feared.

A reconciliation following directly upon and proceeding solely from the spectacle of Hero is, it may be suggested, more likely than the primitive engineering of Prince Pedro to establish those relations existing between Benedick and Beatrice in the closing scenes of the play. The moment of stress once past, they return, not indeed to their former violence of expression, but to an irony which, while not unresponsive to their affection, decently veils it. They do not parade their feelings, nor do they renounce their self-respect, as the eavesdroppers would seem to do.

Between the early scenes of sparring and that of the reconciliation lie two acts, across which, inevitably, the reconciliation appears somewhat abrupt. By bridging the gap, Shakespeare might no doubt have removed this effect. But he did not choose to do so, and it is useless to speculate what he might have done.

Instead, he chose to stop the gap—a more respectful verb would hardly be in place—with the eavesdroppings. If the question 'Why?' is raised, perhaps the only way to answer is to fall back on the theory of diversions in comedy, and suggest they were intended as such—diversions for the spectator, not for the reader, for the scenes are said to be successful on the stage. If so, however, Shakespeare has laid himself open to a charge of gross carelessness—carelessness, too, of the most positive kind: for he has included in his comedy diversions which are neither obviously irrelevant to the main action nor illustrative of it, so to speak, from the outside (for a diversion need not be wholly alien to this, though lying apart from it); but rather obscure the main action by getting between it and the reader. Such irresponsibility may cause the latter to stare and gasp; he should, however, reflect that it is of a piece with the mismanagement of eavesdropping in the earlier part of the play, and with the inconsequential treatment of Prince Pedro.

So far from lending themselves to separation from the main plot, therefore, the Benedick and Beatrice scenes, or such among them as are of serious significance, lead up to it and find in it their conclusion; while apart from it, the serious are confounded

with the trivial. Further, the main plot is as dependent on them as they on it; and through the main plot, they are related to the Dogberry scenes. For as these light up the ridiculous, so Benedick and Beatrice, it might be suggested, light up the shallow and superficial aspect of Messina society. long intimate with an ache of their own, they are the only ones—apart from the priest—to show charity and reasonableness in the presence of the aches of others. This goes very well, it might be observed, with the rôle of jesters which they have assumed: for these are traditionally the deformed or maimed, and therefore suffering, members of any group.

Thus the tragic scenes of the repudiation of Hero and its immediate consequences would seem to be the centre of unity in *Much Ado*. Other sections of the play look to them for completion; themselves, they draw strength and significance from the other sections. In its closing pages, this article may perhaps attempt to indicate the extent to which they do so.

First however a warning: in these scenes the inequalities resulting from the employment of fragments of differing dates of composition are perhaps more striking than elsewhere. The reader must prepare for the not unexacting task of adapting himself, now to circumspect and transparent verse, now to rapid and more concentrated prose—tuning and re-tuning his ear, hastening or retarding his intelligence as may, at any moment, be appropriate. But if he will undertake the task, he will perhaps find it not unrewarding.

The first characteristic of the scenes to call the attention is, as has been hinted, the complete lack of consideration shown for Hero. Claudio sets about his hangman's task with all the primness he has displayed on other occasions: with regard for the conventional *decorum* of the office or, to adapt one of his own words, the 'comeliness'. He is aware of nothing but of what is due to himself and to society from him, and of that he is fully aware, so that he is hampered by no human weakness:

> There *Leonato*, take her backe againe,
> Give not this rotten Orenge to your friend.

And the Prince speaks in exactly the same tone:

> I stand dishonour'd that have gone about
> To linke my deare friend to a common stale.

'Friend', 'friend'—the echo is revealing. For Leonato is the only person to whom the Prince and Claudio show the slightest tenderness—'*Leonato*, I am sorry you must heare', says the Prince—proving thereby that they recognize in him one of themselves. On his side, Leonato proves himself worthy of the recognition. Until Benedick and Beatrice have set him an example, and until the priest has remonstrated with him, neither does he show any tenderness except to himself:

> Do not live *Hero* . . .
> Thought I thy spirits were stronger than thy shames
> Myself would on the re[ar]ward of reproaches
> Strike at they life. Griev'd I, I had but one?
> . . . . . .
> O one too much by thee: why had I one?

and so on, rising to a fine point of self-pity:

> Why had I not with charitable hand
> Tooke up a beggars issue at my gates,
> Who smeered thus, and mir'd with infamie,
> I might have said, no part of it is mine:
> This shame derives itself from unknowne loines,
> But mine, and mine I liv'd, and mine I prais'd,
> And mine that I was proud on mine so much,
> That I my selfe, was to my selfe not mine:
> Valewing of her, why she, O she is falne
> Into a pit of Inke . . .

Indeed, the only member of the group of 'friends' to make the slightest gesture towards Hero is Don John: a fact which is not insignificant, and which should be remembered in any consideration of the latter. 'Pretty lady', he says,

> I am sorry for thy much misgovernment.

In doing so, of course, his motives are mixed; but at any rate he shows himself aware of human factors in the situation before him—whatever use he make of them—to which even the lady's father is, for the moment, blind.

For time, given the opportunity—procured, as has been said, by the example of Benedick and Beatrice, the wisdom of the priest—does not fail to work on Leonato, so that, by the beginning of Act V, not only does his soul tell him 'Hero is belied', but also, he begins to speak of her as one he loves, not only because she is his (compare the emphasis on the word *mine*, in the passage just quoted), but for her own sake. It is perhaps not fanciful to see the emergence of generous feeling in the following verses:

> Bring me a father that so lov'd his childe,
> Whose joy of her is over-whelmed like mine,
> And bid him speake of patience,
> Measure his woe the length and breadth of mine,
> And let it answer every straine for straine,
> As thus for thus, and such a griefe for such,
> In every lineament, branch, shape, and forme:
> If such a one will smile and stroke his beard,
> And sorrow, wagge,[1] crie hem, when he should grone
> Patch griefe with proverbs, make misfortune drunke,

[1]Amended by the New Cambridge editors to *sorry wag*.

> With candle-wasters: bring him yet to me,
> And I of him will gather patience:
> But there is no such man . . .

Leonato is still primarily occupied with his own grief, but this he now considers not merely as his own, but as directed to an object outside of himself. Whatever the softening that has taken place in him, however, nothing similar has happened to the Prince and Claudio. Time has not been able to effect it; nor does the sight of Leonato and Antonio, no longer 'friends' to established conventions and keeping up appearances as such, but raving at what they feel an injustice. Laying 'reverence' by, and forgetting 'grey heaires and bruise of many daies', they endeavour to provoke the young men to a duel. The latter will not, of course, allow themselves to be drawn:

> Marry beshrew my hand,
> If it should give your age such cause of feare . . .

but what they do is something worse, for they remain impassive. 'Gentlemen both', says the Prince, with an urbanity which, however deferent to Beatrice in the drawing-room, is here an insult both to Leonato and to the Prince himself:

> . . . we will not wake your patience.
> My heart is sorry for your daughter's death:
> But on my honour she is charg'd with nothing
> But what was true, and very full of proofe.

Two old dogs mouthing a bone, on which not only for their lack of teeth but for its own hardness, they make no impression.

Perhaps in this part of the opening scene of Act V the transcription from experience is too immediate, so that what force it possesses is overlaid for the reader by a repulsion which it inspires. If so, the defect is in harmony with the early date, and still somewhat primitive texture; and in any case it is removed, once the old men, retiring from the stage, yield their place to Benedick. This is the new Benedick, roused as has been said to the courage of a conviction that all does not happen always for the best in Messina. Towards Leonato, he has assumed a certain responsibility for Hero's future; and he has further been commissioned by Beatrice to kill, or rather, as it would appear, to assassinate Claudio. For this impetuous lady demands that Benedick shall proceed as unscrupulously towards Claudio as she, in the matter of jesters, had proceeded towards Benedick.

A duel in form is the only possible solution. That is not refused by Claudio, for no gentleman could do such a thing. But as for convincing his prospective antagonist that anything serious lies behind his challenge, Benedick no more than Leonato and Antonio succeeds in making the slightest impression. Claudio and the Prince are back again to their old ways and to their old conversation; seriousness is taboo—and here, it must be admitted,

Shakespeare makes good use of reference to the eavesdropping scenes. Benedick the gull, whom alone the Prince and Claudio choose to recognize in the man before them, forms too striking a contrast to be neglected with Benedick the married man: they use the term in jest, but need not be followed in this. When at length Benedick withdraws, their comment is illuminating:

> *Prince*: He is in earnest.
> *Claudio*: In most profound earnest, and Ile warrant you, for the love of Beatrice.
> *Prince*: And hath challeng'd thee.
> *Claudio*: Most sincerely.
> *Prince*: What a prettie thing a man is, when he goes in his doublet and hose, and leaves off his wit.

Because he no longer consents to be frivolous with the frivolous, Benedick, who alone among the men has shown signs of awakening to wisdom, is dismissed as a greater fool than ever.

Perhaps it is this short interchange, rather than the famous 'Kill Claudio!' which, as Q put it, 'serves to nail the play'. The utter bewilderment of the Prince's 'He is in earnest', indicates the impossibility of his or Claudio's ever awakening to anything which lies beneath appearances, which stretches beyond conventions. Should events take their course, the duel is inevitable.

But naturally, as the play is a comedy, they do not. The genius of comedy brings the watchmen on the stage, with their chance discovery which has escaped the collective wisdoms of the city. The Prince and Claudio emerge unscathed—but also, it is to be feared, uninstructed—from the dangers which involve them, and in which they have involved others; Leonato, relieved, can be his old self again; as for Benedick and Beatrice, they of course are changed, but hold it prudent, now that overriding necessity no longer bids otherwise, to keep the change to themselves. Messina can return to its former gaieties, all joining in a dance which, if the Dogberries are not invited to it, they would have at any rate appreciated, and which they would hardly have disgraced.

All, that is, except one; and as the last word of the play is for Don John, perhaps he may have the last word here. This 'tart' personage, who halts even Beatrice, seems to have had little justice shown him by commentators. Coleridge's 'he is merely shown and then withdrawn', is for example not true—we have just had evidence to the contrary; while if it were, with what skill and what clarity is he shown! The Prince has professed to be reconciled with him, but all that follows is that he is 'trusted with a mussell, and enfranchis'd with a clog'—the Prince, we see once more, has little delicacy in dealing with the unfortunate. Neither crumpling under this treatment like Hero, nor exercising the 'patient sufferance' of Benedick and Beatrice—Don John will neither 'claw no man in his humour', not 'fashion a carriage to rob love from any'—he reacts violently, blindly: threatening more than his enemy with destruction.

It would seem difficult to resist the conclusion that, as Dogberry illustrates the ridiculous, and Benedick and Beatrice the shallow aspect of Messina society, so Don John is sketched in to suggest—in a comedy, no more than a suggestion would be fitting—the tragedy it involves. Even the soundest and justest of societies rests ultimately on the exclusion, and if necessary the elimination of those who refuse to conform; Messina's, if we are right, is none of the most comprehensive. Perhaps therefore it is not altogether inappropriate that *Much Ado* should end with talk—even on Benedick's lips—of 'brave punishments' for Don John.

JAMES SMITH.

GEORGE ELIOT (II)

IF we hesitated to judge that in *Romola* George Eliot 'proceeds from the abstract to the concrete' it would be because 'proceed' might seem to imply 'attain'. Of this monument of excogitation and reconstruction Henry James himself says: 'More than any of her novels it was evolved from her moral consciousness—a moral consciousness encircled by a prodigious amount of literary research'. The 'figures and situations' are indeed 'deeply studied and massively supported', and they represent characteristic preoccupations of the novelist, but they fail to emerge from the state of generalized interest: they are not brought to any sharp edge of realization. Tito Melema, developing a mere mild insufficiency of positive unselfishness into a positive and lethal viciousness illustrates a favourite theme, moral and psychological, but he remains an illustration, thought of, thought out, and painstakingly specified; never becoming anything like a prior reality that embodies the theme and presents it as life. The analogous and worse failure in respect of Savonarola is fairly suggested by such passages of laborious analytic prose as Leslie Stephen quotes (*George Eliot*, p. 134), with the comment:

> 'this almost Germanic concatenation of clauses not only puts such obvious truths languidly, but keeps Savonarola himself at a distance. We are not listening to a Hamlet, but to a judicious critic analysing the state of mind which prompts "to be or not to be" '.

—There is no presence, that is; the analysis serves instead.

Romola herself Leslie Stephen judges more favourably—indeed, very favourably. And it is true that she represents something other than the failure of a powerful mind to warm analysis into creation; she is a palpably emotional presence: Romola, in fact, is another idealized George Eliot—less real than Maggie Tulliver and more idealized. While patrician and commandingly beautiful, she has

also George Eliot's combination of intellectual power, emancipation, inherent piety, and hunger for exaltations.

> 'The pressing problem for Romola just then was . . . to keep alive that flame of unselfish emotion by which a life of sadness might still be a life of active love'.

—With 'Maggie' substituted for 'Romola', that might have come as a patently autobiographical note from *The Mill on the Floss*. And it is the immediate presence of the yearning translator of Strauss that we feel in such situations as this:

> 'Romola, kneeling with buried face on the altar step, was enduring one of those sickening moments when the enthusiasm which had come to her as the only energy strong enough to make life worthy, seemed to be inevitably bound up with vain dreams, and wilful eye-shutting'.

And when we read that 'tender fellow-feeling for the nearest has its danger too, and is apt to be timid and sceptical towards the larger aims without which life cannot rise into religion' we know that we are in direct contact with the 'pressing problem' of the nineteenth-century intellectual, contemporary of Mill, Matthew Arnold and Comte. So that we can hardly help being pryingly personal in our conjectures when, going on, we read:

> 'No one who has ever known what it is thus to lose faith in a fellow man whom he has profoundly loved and reverenced, will lightly say that the shock can leave the faith in the Invisible Goodness unshaken. With the sinking of high human trust, the dignity of life sinks too: we cease to believe in our own better self, since that also is part of the common nature which is degraded in our thought; and all the finer impulses of the soul are dulled'.

—Dr. John Chapman? we ask.

The answer, of course, doesn't matter. The point we have to make is that this closeness of relation between heroine and author is no more here than elsewhere in George Eliot a strength. Romola in fact, has none of the reality associated with Maggie Tulliver, but she brings in the weakness, associated with Maggie, that embarrasses us in *The Mill on the Floss*.

The passage just quoted opens the episode in which Romola, lying down in an open boat, abandons herself to the winds and tides. —'To be freed from the burden of choice when all motive was bruised, to commit herself, sleeping, to destiny which would either bring death or else new necessities that might rouse a new life in her'. 'Had she', she asks, as she lies in the gliding boat, 'found anything like the dream of her girlhood? No'. But she is to find now, in alleged actuality, something embarrassingly like a girlhood dream. She drifts ashore at the plague-stricken village, and, a ministering Madonna—'the Mother with the glory about her tending the sick'—is a miracle for the villagers. It is a miracle for her too,

rescuing her from her 'pressing problem' with a 'flame of unselfish emotion', provided by a heaven-sent chance out of the void.

Few will want to read *Romola* a second time, and few can ever have got through it once without some groans. It is indubitably the work of a very gifted mind, but of a mind misusing itself; and it is the one novel answering to the kind of account of George Eliot that became current during the swing of the pendulum against her after her death.

Yet *Romola* has habitually been included in the lists of cheaper reprints, and probably a good many more readers have tackled it than have ever taken up *Felix Holt*. In writing *Felix Holt*, which brings us back to England, George Eliot did look up the *Times* for 1830 or thereabouts; but there was no tremendous and exhausting labour of historical reconstruction. What called for the most uncongenial hard work on her part was the elaboration of the plot—work (it strikes us to-day) about as perversely, if not as desiccatingly, misdirected as that which went to evoking life at Florence in the time of Savonarola. The complications of the thorough-paced Victorian plot depend, with painful correctness (professional advice having been taken of the Positivist friend, Frederic Harrison), on some esoteric subtleties of the law of entail, and they demand of the reader a strenuousness of attention that, if he is an admirer of George Eliot, he is unwilling to devote.

It is in the theme represented by the title of the book that the 'reflective' preponderance of the 'moral consciousness', working from the 'abstract' without being able to turn it into convincing perception, notably manifests itself. Felix Holt is the ideal working man. Though educated, he is wholly loyal to his class (to the extent of remaining shaggy in appearance and manners), and dedicates his life to its betterment; but, while proposing to take an active part in politics, he refuses to countenance any of the compromises of organized political action. He denounces the Radical agent for fighting the constituency in the usual way. Rational appeal to unalloyed principle—that alone can be permitted; the time-honoured methods of party warfare, defended as practical necessities for party success, debase and betray the people's cause, and there must be no truck with them. Felix is as noble and courageous in act as in ideal, and is wholly endorsed by his creator. That in presenting these unrealities George Eliot gives proof of a keen interest in political, social and economic history, and in the total complex movement of civilization, and exhibits an impressive command of the facts, would seem to confirm the deprecatory view commonly taken of the relation between intellectual and novelist. Here is the way Felix Holt, Radical, talks:

> ' "Oh yes, your ringed and scented men of the people!—I won't be one of them. Let a man throttle himself with a satin stock, and he'll get new wants and new motives. Metamorphosis will have begun at his neck-joint, and it will go on till it has changed his likings first and then his reasoning, which will follow

his likings as the feet of a hungry dog follow his nose. I'll have none of your clerkly gentility. I might end by collecting greasy pence from poor men to buy myself a fine coat and a glutton's dinner, on pretence of serving the poor men. I'd sooner be Paley's fat pigeon than a demagogue all tongue and stomach, though''—here Felix changed his voice a little—''I should like well enough to be another sort of demagogue, if I could''.

' ''Then you have a strong interest in the great political movements of these times?'' said Mr. Lyon, with a perceptible flashing of the eyes.

' ''I should think so. I despise every man who has not—or, having it, doesn't try to rouse it in other men'' '.

Here he is addressing a young lady at their first meeting:

' ''Oh, your niceties—I know what they are'', said Felix, in his usual *fortissimo*. ''They all go on your system of make-believe. 'Rottenness' may suggest what is unpleasant, so you'd better say 'sugar-plums', or something else such a long way off the fact that nobody is obliged to think of it. Those are your roundabout euphuisms that dress up swindling till it looks as well as honesty, and shoot with boiled pease instead of bullets. I hate your gentlemanly speakers'' '.[1]

The consequences of general intention combined with inexperience are disastrously plain. The idealizing bent seen to be so marked in Adam Bede when we compare him with Caleb Garth of *Middlemarch* is not really a strength; but George Eliot knew the country artisan at first hand and intimately. In offering to present the Dignity of Labour in the ideal town working-man she is relying on her 'moral consciousness' unqualified by first-hand knowledge.

Felix Holt's very unideal mother, though not the same kind of disaster (she's only a minor figure, of course) is not much more convincing; she seems to be done out of Dickens rather than from life. The Reverend Rufus Lyon, the Congregationalist minister, heroically quaint reminder of the heroic age of Puritanism (and inspired, one guesses, by Scott), is incredible and a bore—to say which is a severe criticism, since his talk occupies a large proportion of the book. Esther, the beautiful and elegant young lady passing as his daughter, is interesting only in relation to other feminine studies of the author's, and to her treatment in general of feminine charm.

But there is an element in the novel as yet untouched on. It

[1]Compare this later address of his to Esther: ' ''I wonder'', he went on, still looking at her, ''whether the subtle measuring of forces will ever come to measuring the force there would be in one beautiful woman whose mind was as noble as her face was beautiful—who made a man's passion for her rush in one current with all the great aims of his life'' '.

is represented by this, where the dialogue is so different in quality from that in which Felix Holt figures, and the analysis of so different an order (and in so different a prose) from that characteristic of *Romola*:

'"Harold is remarkably acute and clever", he began at last, since Mrs. Transom did not speak. "If he gets into Parliament, I have no doubt he will distinguish himself. He has a quick eye for business of all kinds".

'"That is no comfort to me", said Mrs. Transom. To-day she was more conscious than usual of that bitterness which was always in her mind in Jermyn's presence, but which was carefully suppressed because she could not endure that the degradation she inwardly felt should ever become visible or audible in acts or words of her own—should ever be reflected in any word or look of his. For years there had been a deep silence about the past between them: on her side, because she remembered; on his, because he more and more forgot.

'"I trust he is not unkind to you in any way. I know his opinions pain you; but I trust you find him in everything else disposed to be a good son".

'"Oh, to be sure—good as men are disposed to be to women, giving them cushions and carriages, and recommending them to enjoy themselves, and then expecting them to be contented under contempt and neglect. I have no power over him—remember that—none".

'Jermyn turned to look in Mrs. Transom's face: it was long since he had heard her speak to him as if she were losing her self-command.

'"Has he shown any unpleasant feeling about your management of the affairs?"

'"*My* management of the affairs!" Mrs. Transom said, with concentrated rage, flashing a fierce look at Jermyn. She checked herself: she felt as if she were lighting a torch to flare on her own past folly and misery. It was a resolve which had become a habit, that she would never quarrel with this man—never tell him what she saw him to be. She had kept her woman's pride and sensibility intact: through all her life there had vibrated the maiden need to have her hand kissed and be the object of chivalry. And so she sank into silence again, trembling.

'Jermyn felt annoyed—nothing more. There was nothing in his mind corresponding to the intricate meshes of sensitiveness in Mrs. Transome's. He was anything but stupid; yet he always blundered when he wanted to be delicate or magnanimous; he constantly sought to soothe others by praising himself. Moral vulgarity cleaved to him like an hereditary odour. He blundered now.

'"My dear Mrs. Transome", he said, in a tone of bland kindness, "you are agitated—you appear angry with me. Yet I think, if you consider, you will see that you have nothing to

complain of in me, unless you will complain of the inevitable course of man's life. I have always met your wishes both in happy circumstances and in unhappy ones. I should be ready to do so now, if it were possible''.

'Every sentence was as pleasant to her as if it had been cut in her bared arm. Some men's kindness and love-making are more exasperating, more humiliating than others' derision but the pitiable woman who has once made herself secretly dependent on a man who is beneath her in feeling, must bear that humiliation for fear of worse. Coarse kindness is at least better than coarse anger; and in all private quarrels the duller nature is triumphant by reason of its dulness. Mrs. Transome knew in her inmost soul that those relations which had sealed her lips on Jermyn's conduct in business matters, had been with him a ground for presuming that he should have impunity in any lax dealing into which circumstances had led him. She knew that she herself had endured all the more privation because of his dishonest selfishness. And now, Harold's long-deferred heirship, and his return with startlingly unexpected penetration, activity, and assertion of mastery, had placed them both in the full presence of a difficulty which had been prepared by the years of vague uncertainty as to issues'.

It should be plain from the quality of this that the theme it handles is profoundly felt and sharply realized. This theme concerns Mrs. Transome, her son Harold, and the family lawyer, Matthew Jermyn. It is utterly different in kind from anything else in *Felix Holt* and from anything earlier of George Eliot's, and when we come to it we see finally that Henry James's antithesis, 'perceptive' and 'reflective', will not do. For if we ask how this art is so astonishingly finer and maturer than anything George Eliot had done before, the answer is in terms of a perception that is so much more clear and profound because the perceiving focuses the profound experience of years—experience worked over by reflective thought, and so made capable of focusing. What we perceive depends on what we bring to the perceiving; and George Eliot brought a magnificent intelligence, functioning here as mature understanding. Intelligence in her was not always worsted by emotional needs; the relation between the artist and the intellectual in her (Henry James speaks of her 'exemption from cerebral lassitude') was not always a matter of her intellect being enlisted in the service of her immaturity.

The beneficent relation between artist and intellectual is to be seen in the new impersonality of the Transome theme. The theme is realized with an intensity certainly not inferior to that of the most poignant autobiographical places in George Eliot, but the directly personal vibration—the directly personal engagement of the novelist—that we feel in Maggie Tulliver's intensities even at their most valid is absent here. 'The more perfect the artist, the more completely separate in him will be the man who suffers and

the mind which creates' : it is in the part of *Felix Holt* dealing with Mrs. Transome that George Eliot becomes one of the great creative artists. She has not here, it will be noted, a heroine with whom she can be tempted to identify herself. Mrs. Transome is County, and how unlike she is to the novelist appears sufficiently in this account of her :

> 'She had that high-born imperious air which would have marked her as an object of hatred and reviling by a revolutionary mob. Her person was too typical of social distinctions to be passed by with indifference by anyone : it would have fitted an empress in her own right, who had had to rule in spite of faction, to dare the violation of treaties and dread retributive invasions, to grasp after new territories, to be defiant in desperate circumstances, and to feel a woman's hunger of the heart for ever unsatisfied . . . When she was young she had been thought wonderfully clever and accomplished, and had been rather ambitious of intellectual superiority—had secretly picked out for private reading the lighter parts of dangerous French authors—and in company had been able to talk of Mr. Burke's style, or of Chateaubriand's eloquence—had laughed at the Lyrical Ballads and admired Mr. Southey's Thalaba. She always thought that the dangerous French authors were wicked and that her reading of them was a sin; but many sinful things were highly agreeable to her, and many things which she did not doubt to be good and true were dull and meaningless. She found ridicule of Biblical characters very amusing, and she was interested in stories of illicit passion : but she believed all the while that truth and safety lay in due attendance on prayers and sermons, in the admirable doctrines and ritual of the Church of England, equally remote from Puritanism and Popery; in fact, in such a view of this world and the next as would preserve the existing arrangements of English society quite unshaken, keeping down the obtrusiveness of the vulgar and the discontent of the poor'.

The treatment of Mrs. Transome is not, as this description may suggest, ironical. The irony, a tragic irony, resides in her situation, which is presented with complete objectivity—though with poignant sympathy, unlike as her strains and distresses are to the novelist's own. In this sympathy there is not a trace of self-pity or self-indulgence. Mrs. Transome is a study in Nemesis. And, although her case is conceived in an imagination that is profoundly moral, the presentment of it is a matter of psychological observation —psychological observation so utterly convincing in its significance that the price paid by Mrs. Transome for her sin in inevitable consequences doesn't need a moralist's insistence, and there is none; to speak of George Eliot here as a moralist would, one feels, be to misplace a stress. She is simply a great artist—a great novelist, with a great novelist's psychological insight and fineness of human valuation. Here is one aspect of Mrs. Transome's tragedy :

'The mother's love is at first an absorbing delight, blunting all other sensibilities; it is an expansion of the animal existence; it enlarges the imagined range for self to move in: but in after years it can only continue to be joy on the same terms as other long-lived love—that is, by much suppression of self, and power of living in the experience of another. Mrs. Transome had darkly felt the pressure of that unchangeable fact. Yet she had clung to the belief that somehow the possession of this son was the best thing she lived for; to believe otherwise would have made her memory too ghastly a companion'.

Mrs. Transome, of course, is not capable of recognizing the 'unchangeable fact' of which she 'darkly feels the pressure'. She cannot alter herself, and for her the worth and meaning of life lie in command, and the imposition of her will. This is shown to us, not with any incitement to censure, but as making her, in its inevitable consequences, tragically pitiable. For her feeble-minded husband she can feel little but contempt. That the unsatisfactory elder son who took after him is dead is matter for rejoicing: Harold, the second and quite other son, now becomes the heir, and, returning home from the Levant where he has made a fortune, will be able to put the encumbered family estate on a new footing, so that, belatedly, the lady of Transome Court will assume real dominion, and take her due place in the County. That dream, for many starved years the reason for living, dies as soon as they meet, and the despairing bitterness that engulfs her as she realizes that he is indeed her son,[2] and that for him too command and the exercise of will are the meaning of life, is evoked (notably in the exchanges with Denner, her maid) with an astringently moving power unsurpassed in literature.

To the tormenting frustration and hopelessness is soon added fear. It is not only that Harold, with his poised kindness that is so utterly unaware of her, frustrates her social hopes by proclaiming himself a Radical, and, at home, supersedes her authority, her *raison d'être*; he terrifies her by proposing to follow up his suspicions concerning Matthew Jermyn's custodianship of the family interests. The mine waiting to be detonated will blast them all three. For Harold is also Jermyn's son.

It is remarkable—and it is characteristic of George Eliot's mature art—that the treatment of Mrs. Transome's early lapse should have in it nothing of the Victorian moralist. In the world of this art the atmosphere of the taboo is unknown; there is none

[2]'Under the shock of discovering her son's Radicalism Mrs. Transome had no impulse to say one thing rather than another; as in a man who has just been branded on the forehead all wonted motives would be uprooted. Harold, on his side, had no wish opposed to filial kindness, but his busy thoughts were imperiously determined by habits which had no reference to any woman's feelings . . .'

of the excited hush, the skirting round, the thrill of shocked reprobation, or any of the forms of sentimentality, typical of Victorian fiction when such themes are handled. There is instead an intently matter-of-fact directness: this is human nature, this is the fact, and these are the inexorable consequences. Apart from the fear, the worst face, as Mrs. Transome sees it, of regret for the past is what we have here (it follows on the first long quotation made above from *Felix Holt*):

> 'In this position, with a great dread hanging over her, which Jermyn knew, and ought to have felt that he had caused her, she was inclined to lash him with indignation, to scorch him with the words that were just the fit names for his doings—inclined all the more when he spoke with an insolent blandness, ignoring all that was truly in her heart. But no sooner did the words "You have brought it on me" rise within her than she heard within also the retort, "You brought it on yourself". Not for all the world beside could she bear to hear that retort uttered from without. What did she do? With strange sequence to all that rapid tumult, after a few moment's silence she said, in a gentle and almost tremulous voice—
>
> "Let me take your arm" '.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> 'As she took away her hand, Jermyn let his arm fall, put both his hands in his pockets, and shrugging his shoulders said, "I shall use him as he uses me".
>
> 'Jermyn had turned round his savage side, and the blandness was out of sight. It was this that had always frightened Mrs. Transome: there was a possibility of fierce insolence in this man who was to pass with those nearest to her as her indebted servant, but whose brand she secretly bore. She was as powerless with him as she was with her son.
>
> 'This woman, who loved rule, dared not speak another word of attempted persuasion'.

Mrs. Transome has, and can have, no impulse towards what the moralist means by repentance:

> 'She had no ultimate analysis of things that went beyond blood and family—the Herons of Fenshore or the Badgers of Hillbury. She had never seen behind the canvas with which her life was hung. In the dim background there was the burning mount and the tables of the law; in the foreground there was Lady Debarry privately gossiping about her, and Lady Wyvern finally deciding not to send her invitations to dinner'.

She is herself here in her reaction to Jermyn's suggestion that he shall be saved by her telling Harold:

> ' "But now you have asked me. I will never tell him! Be ruined—no—do something more dastardly to save yourself. If

I sinned, my judgment went beforehand—that I should sin for a man like you' ".

This limitation is of the essence of her tragedy; it goes, as George Eliot presents her, with her being an impressive and sympathy-commanding figure. Here we have her enduring the agonized helplessness of a moment of tension:

'When Harold left the table she went into the long drawing-room, where she might relieve her restlessness by walking up and down, and catch the sound of Jermyn's entrance into Harold's room, which was close by. Here she moved to and fro amongst the rose-coloured satin of chairs and curtains—the great story of this world reduced for her to the little tale of her own existence—dull obscurity everywhere, except where the keen light fell on the narrow track of her own lot, wide only for a woman's anguish. At last she heard the expected ring and foot-step, and the opening and closing door. Unable to walk about any longer, she sank into a large cushioned chair, helpless and prayerless. She was not thinking of God's anger or mercy but of her son's. She was thinking of what might be brought, not by death, but by life'.

There is no touch of the homiletic about this; it is dramatic constatation, poignant and utterly convincing, and the implied moral, which is a matter of the enacted inevitability, is that perceived by a psychological realist. As the strain develops for her, our sympathetic interest is painfully engaged, so that when we come to the critical point (C. XLII) at which Jermyn says, 'It is not to be supposed that Harold would go against me . . . if he knew the whole truth', we feel the full atrocity the proposition has for her. Further, we take the full force and finality of the disaster represented by her now breaking her life-long resolve never to quarrel 'with this man—never tell him what she knew him to be'.

This man is perfectly done. For him Nemesis has a face corresponding to his moral quality; it is something he contemplates 'in anger, in exasperation, that Harold, precisely Harold Transome, should have turned out to be the probable instrument of a visitation that would be bad luck, not justice; for is there any justice when ninety-nine men out of a hundred escape? He found himself beginning to hate Harold . . . '. By delicate touches the resemblance between father and son is conveyed to us, and the discrimination made between their respective egoisms.

If we agree that the two men are 'woman's men', it is not in any sense that detracts from their convincingness; it is rather in the sense that the penetrating and 'placing' analysis of their masculinity is something, we feel, that it took a woman to do. Jermyn's case is Tito Melema's; this time not thought out in an effort to work from the abstract to the concrete, but presented in the life, with compelling reality; he is unquestionably 'there' in the full concrete, and unquestionably (as Tito, in so far as he exists,

is not) a man—one of 'those who are led on through the years by the gradual demands of a selfishness which has spread its fibres far and wide through the intricate vanities and sordid cares of an everyday existence'.

As for Harold, he has 'the energetic will, the quick perception, and the narrow imagination which make what is called the "practical mind" '. He is a 'clever, frank, good-natured egoist'.

> 'His very good-nature was unsympathetic: it never came from any thorough understanding or deep respect for what was in the mind of the person he obliged or indulged; it was like his kindness to his mother—an arrangement of his for the happiness of others, which, if they were sensible, ought to succeed'.

He cannot, of course, help his parentage; the ironic element of Nemesis in his disaster is given here:[3]

> ' "Confound the fellow—with his Mrs. Jermyn! Does he think we are on a footing for me to know anything about his wife?" '.

It is characteristic of George Eliot that she can make such a man the focus of a profoundly moving tragedy: for Harold unquestionably becomes that for us at the point when, turning violently on Jermyn, who has been driven to come out with, 'I am your father!', he catches sight, in the ensuing scuffle, of the two faces side by side in a mirror, and sees 'the hated fatherhood reasserted'. This may sound melodramatic as recapitulated here; that it should come with so final a rightness in the actual text shows with what triumphant success George Eliot has justified her high tragic conception of her theme. It is characteristic of her to be able to make a tragedy out of 'moral mediocrity'. The phrase is used to convey the redeemed Esther Lyon's sense of life at Transome Court, and Esther has been represented earlier as reflecting: 'Mr. Transome had his beetles, but Mrs. Transome—?' There is nothing sentimental about George Eliot's vision of human mediocrity and 'platitude', but she sees in them matters for compassion, and her dealings with them are assertions of human dignity. To be able to assert human dignity in this way is greatness. 'One kind of greatness', someone may wish to comment. In any case, the contrast with Flaubert is worth pondering.

Felix Holt is not one of the novels that cultivated persons are supposed to have read, and, if read at all, it is hardly ever mentioned, so that there is reason for saying that one of the finest things in fiction is virtually unknown. It is exasperating that George

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[3] "Why do you wish to shield such a fellow, mother?" . . . Mrs. Transome's rising temper was turned into a horrible sensation, as painful as a sudden concussion from something hard and immovable when we have struck out with our fist, intending to hit something warm, soft and breathing like ourselves. Poor Mrs. Transome's strokes were sent jarring back on her by a hard unendurable past'.

Eliot should have embedded some of her maturest work in a mass that is so much other—though *Felix Holt* is not, like *Romola*, 'unreadable', and the superlative quality of the live part ought to have compelled recognition. It is exasperating and it is, again, characteristic of her. Only one book can, as a whole (though not without qualification) be said to represent her mature genius. That, of course, is *Middlemarch*.

The necessary part of great intellectual powers in such a success as *Middlemarch* is obvious. The sub-title of the book is *A Study of Provincial Life*, and it is no idle pretension. The sheer informedness about society, its mechanism, the ways in which people of different classes live and (if they have to) earn their livelihoods, impresses us with its range, and it is real knowledge; that is, it is knowledge alive with understanding. George Eliot had said in *Felix Holt*, by way of apology for the space she devoted to 'social changes' and 'public matters': 'there is no private life which has not been determined by a wider public life'. The aim implicit in this remark is magnificently achieved in *Middlemarch*, and it is achieved by a novelist whose genius manifests itself in a profound analysis of the individual. We can see that here indeed Beatrice Potter, training herself to become a 'sociological investigator', might have looked without disappointment for what she failed to find in the text-books.[4]

The intellectual, again, is apparent in the conception of certain of the most strikingly successful themes. Only a novelist who had known from the inside the exhaustions and discouragements of long-range intellectual enterprises could have conveyed the pathos of Dr. Casaubon's predicament. Not that Casaubon is supposed to have a remarkable intellect; he is an intellectual *manqué*:

> 'Nay, are there many situations more sublimely tragic than the struggle of the soul with the demand to renounce a work which has been all the significance of its life—a significance which is to vanish as the waters which come and go where no man has need of them? But there was nothing to strike others as sublime about Mr. Casaubon, and Lydgate, who had some contempt at hand for futile scholarship, felt a little amusement mingling with his pity. He was at present too ill acquainted with disaster to enter into the pathos of a lot where everything is below the level of tragedy except the passionate egoism of the sufferer'.

Actually, the *pathos* that Casaubon enacts 'below the tragic level' is not quite what this passage by itself might suggest; egoism plays a part more like that which it plays in Mrs. Transome's tragedy. The essential predicament in both cases involves

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[4] 'For any detailed description of the complexity of human nature, of the insurgence of instinct in the garb of reason, of the multifarious play of the social environment on the individual ego, and of the individual ego on the social environment, I had to turn to the novelists and poets' . . . *My Apprenticeship*, p. 138.

the insulation of the egoism from all large or heroic ends. Not only is Casaubon's scholarship futile; he himself inwardly knows it to be so, and is more preoccupied with saving himself from having to recognize the fact than with anything else. To have communicated movingly the pathos of such a situation is the more remarkable in that Lydgate's amused contempt is clearly not altogether unlike something that is strongly felt by the novelist: she does more than hint at the potentialities of comedy in Casaubon, and of a comedy more critical than sympathetic. This, for instance, is extraordinarily like one of the early satiric felicities of Mr. E. M. Forster:

> 'Mr. Casaubon, as might be expected, spent a great deal of his time at the Grange in these weeks, and the hindrance which courtship occasioned to the progress of his great work—the Key to all Mythologies—naturally made him look forward the more eagerly to the happy termination of courtship. But he had deliberately incurred the hindrance, having made up his mind that it was now time for him to adorn his life with the graces of female companionship, to irradiate the gloom which fatigue was apt to hang over the intervals of studious labour with the play of female fancy, and to secure in this, his culminating age, the solace of female tendance for his declining years. Hence he determined to abandon himself to the stream of feeling, and perhaps was surprised to find what an exceedingly shallow rill it was. As in droughty regions baptism by immersion could only be performed symbolically, so Mr. Casaubon found that sprinkling was the utmost approach to a plunge which his stream would afford him; and he concluded that the poets had much exaggerated the force of masculine passion. Nevertheless, he observed with pleasure that Miss Brooke showed an ardent submissive affection which promised to fulfill his most agreeable previsions of marriage. It had once or twice crossed his mind that possibly there was some deficiency in Dorothea to account for the moderation of his abandonment; but he was unable to discern the deficiency, or to figure to himself a woman who would have pleased him better; so that there was clearly no reason to fall back upon but the exaggerations of human tradition'.

—Compare that with the account of Mr. Pembroke's proposal in *The Longest Journey*, and it is difficult not to suspect that this is in a different class from the general resemblances that relate Mr. Forster by way of George Eliot and Jane Austen back to Fielding, and that we have a direct relation of reminiscence here. However that may be, the point to be made regards the critical quality of George Eliot's irony. Here we have the note again:

> 'He had done nothing exceptional in marrying—nothing but what society sanctions and considers an occasion for wreaths and bouquets. It had occurred to him that he must not any longer defer his intention of matrimony, and he had reflected that in

taking a wife, a man of good position should expect and carefully choose a blooming young lady—the younger the better, because more educable, and submissive—of a rank equal to his own, of religious principles, virtuous disposition, and good understanding. On such a young lady he would make handsome settlements, and he would neglect no arrangement for her happiness: in return, he should receive family pleasures and leave behind him that copy of himself which seemed so urgently required of a man—to the sonneteers of the sixteenth century. Times had altered since then, and no sonneteer had insisted on Mr. Casaubon's leaving a copy of himself; moreover he had not yet succeeded in issuing copies of his mythological key; but he had always intended to acquit himself by marriage, and the sense that he was fast leaving the years behind him, that the world was getting dimmer and that he felt lonely, was a reason to him for losing no more time in overtaking domestic delights before they too were left behind by the years.

'And when he had seen Dorothea he believed that he had found even more than he demanded: she might really be such a helpmate to him as would enable him to dispense with a hired secretary, an aid which Mr. Casaubon had never yet employed and had a suspicious dread of. (Mr. Casaubon was nervously conscious that he was expected to manifest a powerful mind). Providence, in its kindness, had supplied him with the wife he needed. A wife, a modest young lady, with the purely appreciative, unambitious abilities of her sex, is sure to think her husband's mind powerful. Whether Providence had taken equal care of Miss Brooke in presenting her with Mr. Casaubon was an idea which could hardly occur to him. Society never made the preposterous demand that a man should think as much about his own qualifications for making a charming girl happy as he thinks of hers for making himself happy. As if a man could choose not only his wife but his wife's husband! Or as if he were bound to provide charms for his posterity in his own person! —When Dorothea accepted him with effusion, that was only natural; and Mr. Casaubon believed that his happiness was going to begin'.

By now the torture has begun for Mr. Casaubon, and is felt as such by us. For all the tone that has just been sampled, we feel his torment of isolation, self-distrust having, with terrible irony, been turned by his marriage into a peculiarly torturing form of solitary confinement:

'We are angered even by the full acceptance of our humiliating confessions—how much more by hearing in hard distinct syllables from the lips of a near observer, those confused murmurs which we try to call morbid, and strive against as if they were the oncoming of numbness! And this cruel outward accuser was there in the shape of a wife—nay, of a young bride, who, instead of observing his abundant pen-scratches and

amplitude of paper with the uncritical awe of an elegant-minded canary-bird seemed to present herself as a spy watching everything with a malign power of inference. Here, towards this particular point of the compass, Mr. Casaubon had a sensitiveness to match Dorothea's, and an equal quickness to imagine more than the fact. He had formerly observed with approbation her capacity for worshipping the right object; he now foresaw with sudden terror that this capacity might be re-placed by presumption, this worship by the most exasperating of all criticism—that which sees vaguely a great many fine ends, and has not the least notion what it costs to reach them'.

It is not only an intellectual, it is a spirit profoundly noble, one believing profoundly in a possible nobility to be aimed at by men, that can make us, with her, realize such a situation fully as one for compassion. Close upon the longer ironic passage quoted above she says:

'It is an uneasy lot at best, to be what we call highly taught and yet not to enjoy: to be present at this great spectacle of life and never to be liberated from a small hungry shivering self—never to be fully possessed by the glory we behold, never to have our consciousness rapturously transformed into the vividness of a thought, the ardour of a passion, the energy of an action, but always to be scholarly and uninspired, ambitious and timid, scrupulous and dim-sighted'.

Such a passage reminds us—and the prompt recognition is a wise insurance when paying tribute to George Eliot's nobility—that her nobility is not altogether a simple subject. The reminder is effected by something in the mode of expression; something adverting us that Dorothea isn't far away. George Eliot tends to identify herself with Dorothea, though Dorothea is far from being the whole of George Eliot. When 'nobility' is mentioned in connection with George Eliot it is probable that most people think of the Dorothea (or Maggie Tulliver) in her. I want at the moment to insist (postponing the consideration of Dorothea, who doesn't represent her author's strength) that what we have in the treatment of Casaubon is wholly strong.

F. R. Leavis.

[To be concluded].

FLAUBERT (II)

THE preoccupation of the nineteenth-century novelists with the physical appearance of the external world, their obsession with the impact of material reality on their sensibility, is a curious phenomenon. The great French writers of the past had displayed a singular lack of interest in the external world and in 'Nature'; their whole attention was focussed on the drama going on inside the mind. Feelings were determined by the clash of personalities, never by the sense of being hemmed in by unending rows of houses. We have no idea what their characters looked like, what sort of clothes they wore or what sort of houses they lived in. Descriptions of their persons were for the most part purely formal; clothes and nature were only interesting in so far as they illuminated the inner drama. Thus we have Phèdre's:

> Que ces vains ornements, que ces voiles me pèsent!

And Antiochus':

> Dans l'Orient désert quel devint mon ennui.

The interest in nature which emerged during the eighteenth century was a reaction against the excessively civilized order of the seventeenth century. It is not surprising that this feeling should have developed into nature-worship or that nature should later have been regarded as a sanctuary, a refuge from the horrors of industrial civilization. It has not, perhaps, been sufficiently remarked that the converse is also true. Nineteenth-century materialism—the preoccupation with buildings, money and clothes—was a desperate attempt to find something solid and enduring, something which one could touch and feel, in a world of dissolving values. In Baudelaire it produced great poetry of a new kind and even Balzac's interest in the physical is a sign of vitality. Flaubert's preoccupation was of a different order. 'Pour qu'une chose soit intéressante', he remarked in a letter to Alfred le Poittevin, 'il suffit de la regarder longtemps'.[1] *L'Education sentimentale* is in the main an illustration of the falsity of this disastrous maxim:

> 'La plaine, bouleversée, semblait de vagues ruines. L'enceinte des fortifications y faisait un renflement horizontal; et, sur les trottoirs en terre qui bordaient la route, de petits arbres sans branches étaient défendus par des lattes hérissées de clous. Des établissements de produits chimiques alternaient avec des chantiers de marchands de bois . . . '

[1] *Correspondance*, I, p. 192.

This extract—there is a great deal more of it—is taken from an account of one of Frédéric's journeys to Paris; but Flaubert uses precisely the same method in other contexts. The first thing that strikes us is the writer's complete lack of interest in what he is describing. The next is the manner in which the objects are set down, one after another, like a catalogue. 'La plaine, bouleversée, semblait de vagues ruines' is a good description of the process. For the whole scene disintegrates into 'vagues ruines', into a mass of inanimate objects which are without any relation to one another or to the observer. Instead of words becoming things as they must do in good prose, things become words and the words fall on the page like lumps of lead, meaninglessly. Flaubert's Paris is simply a confused mass of bricks and mortar. It is not comparable to Baudelaire's Paris or to Joyce's Dublin or Conrad's London in *The Secret Agent*.

Flaubert himself seems to have been aware that there was something wrong and in other places he is obviously at pains to cover the gaps:

> 'Mais le soleil se couchait, et le vent froid soulevait des tourbillons de poussière. Les cochers baissaient le menton dans leurs cravates, les roues se mettaient à tourner plus vite, le macadam grinçait; et tous les équipages descendaient au grand trot la longue avenue, en se frôlant, se dépassant, s'écartant les uns des autres, puis, sur la place de la Concorde, se dispersaient. Derrière les Tuileries, le ciel prenait la teinte des ardoises. Les arbres du jardin formaient deux masses énormes, violacées par le sommet. Les becs de gaz s'allumaient, et la Seine, verdâtre dans toute son étendue, se déchirait en moires d'argent contre les piles des ponts'.

This passage has the same faults as the previous one, but Flaubert's subterfuges are not without interest. His use of three verbs together all expressing movement—'se frôlant, se dépassant, s'écartant'—was a favourite trick and it is employed here to give the monotonous prose a specious life. This also applies to the colours. Flaubert had little eye for colour. It is a sign of his lack of sensibility that he nearly always chose the heavy, garish colours like *violacées* and *verdâtre*. The last sentence, like so many in Flaubert, reminds one uncomfortably of a crude coloured lithograph.

The late Jean Prévost has spoken of Flaubert's style 'qui rend tout immobile',[2] and in reading him we constantly have the impression that the tempo of life is being deliberately slowed down, that a strange immobility is stealing over human feelings which stiffen and die, crushed beneath the impact of their surroundings.

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[2] 'Son style, qui rend tout immobile, est la plus singulière fontaine pétrifiante de notre littérature, et une source pleure sous ce marbre'. In *Problèmes du roman*, Brussels, 1945, p. 26.

Turn, for example, to the account of Frédéric and Rosanette's visit to Fontainebleau.

> 'Les résidences royales ont en elles une mélancolie particulière, qui tient sans doute à leurs dimensions trop considérables pour le petit nombre de leurs hôtes, au silence qu'on est surpris d'y trouver après tant de fanfares, à leur luxe immobile prouvant par sa vieillesse la fugacité des dynasties, l'éternelle misère de tout;—et cette exhalaison des siècles, engourdissante et funèbre comme un parfum de momie, se fait sentir même aux têtes naïves. Rosanette bâillait démesurément. Ils s'en retournèrent à l'hôtel'.

Flaubert's starting point is the 'mélancolie particulière' which the visitors experience when confronted by historic monuments. It is connected at once with their physical proportions, with the 'dimensions trop considérables pour le petit nombre de leurs hôtes', with the silence and the 'luxe immobile'. Size is linked with age and the 'mélancolie particulière' transformed into 'l'éternelle misère de tout'. The repetition and the use of the heavy Latinised vocabulary give the prose its soporific quality; we feel the 'exhalaison des siècles' enveloping the visitors and overpowering them. The whole experience peters out in a sense of vacancy, in 'Rosanette bâillait démesurément'. The reader himself feels tempted to yawn as Frédéric and Rosanette suddenly turn for home, their minds a blank.

This no doubt is a description of a particular incident, but the method is characteristic and it enables us to understand the curious dullness of *l'Education sentimentale*. Flaubert's obsession with bricks and mortar, with distance, size and shape, turns his characters into ridiculous dwarf-like creatures who move convulsively through this dead silent world like the figures in an animated cartoon.

It is, indeed, of a film that the book continually reminds me—a film of inordinate length which in spite of good 'shots' and even good 'sequences' has almost every fault that a film can have. There are times when the picture is out of focus, when the sound-track degenerates into an incoherent mutter or fails altogether, or when the camera goes tracking interminably over the roofs and façades of buildings, nosing in and out of doors and windows and prying into back yards without the mind being able to grasp the significance of what is being shown. At other times it dwindles into a jerky, meaningless flicker. Then, suddenly, a scene is thrown into sharp relief, some object assumes, for a moment, immense significance, only to be swallowed up again in the endless meandering.

The discussion of these passages leads to other considerations. On the first page of *l'Education sentimentale* Flaubert describes the departure of the boat which is carrying Frédéric away from Paris to his home town:

'Enfin le navire partit; et les deux berges, peuplées de magasins, de chantiers et d'usines, filèrent comme deux larges rubans que l'on déroule'.

A few pages later we read:

' . . . et l'ennui, vaguement répandu, semblait alanguir la marche du bateau et rendre l'aspect des voyageurs plus insignifiant encore'.

The first image is not altogether a happy one and in the second the artifice is, perhaps, too evident; but the contrast between the two, between the brittle jerky movement of the first and the slow heavy movement of the second, reflects the peculiar rhythm of the book. It is a twofold rhythm, a sense of life trying vainly to break through the heavy monotony of the style and achieving only a few jerky spasms. The phenomenon described in the second example—the sudden feeling that life has come to a standstill—is not an uncommon one, but Flaubert gives it a personal interpretation. The *ennui* is transformed into something tangible which smothers feeling, striking at the roots of life and reducing everything to the same drab level of monotony.

'Tout ce premier livre', wrote Thibaudet of *l'Education sentimentale*, 'gardera ce rythme de l'eau qui coule, de ce bateau sur une rivière où Frédéric laisse aller des images flottantes de la vie qu'il se compose . . . Le thème de l'eau est repris dans la descente des voitures aux Champs-Elysées. Tout cela, dans le tableau emporté par la continuité liquide des imparfaits, coule vers la Seine, va rejoindre la rivière qui emporte tout'.[3]

Thibaudet is speaking of the passage beginning 'Mais le soleil se couchait . . . ' which has already been discussed. I think that it will probably be agreed that the 'continuité liquide des imparfaits' is a misleading description of the rhythm of the novel and that faults of style rob the 'rivière qui emporte tout' of the tragic significance with which Thibaudet tries to invest it. But though Thibaudet seems to me to be too indulgent in his interpretation of Flaubert's symbolism, the suggestion that there is a link between the journeys by water and the journeys by coach is an interesting one. The whole of *l'Education sentimentale* is in a sense an account of a journey through life, but a journey in which the traveller is a spectator rather than an actor, in which life is *seen* from the deck of a ship or the inside of a coach instead of being *lived*, emphasizing the paucity of Frédéric's contacts with life and not the richness of his experience:

'Un peu plus loin, on découvrit un château, à toit pointu, avec des tourelles carrées. Un parterre de fleurs s'étalait devant sa façade; et des avenues s'enfonçaient, comme des voûtes noires,

[3] *Gustave Flaubert, 1821-1880*, Paris, 1922, pp. 165, 166. (This is the best 'defence' of Flaubert that I have come across).

sous les hauts tilleuls. Il se la figura passant au bord des charmilles. A ce moment une jeune femme et un jeune homme se montrèrent sur le perron, entre les caisses d'orangers. Puis tout disparut'.

This passage, which is quoted by Thibaudet, is taken from the account of Frédéric's journey to Nogent, but it does not seem to me to support his conclusions. The description of the ancient château, where Frédéric imagines himself wandering with Mme. Arnoux, introduces romantic associations which are suddenly focussed in the precise image of 'une jeune dame et jeune homme . . . entre les caisses d'orangers'. The young couple is a symbol of 'Life' beckoning to Frédéric from the river bank. Then, with characteristic abruptness, the vision disappears. The 'Puis tout disparut' makes us feel that Frédéric has missed his chance; life has escaped him, as it always will, and the jerky restless movement reasserts itself.

This passage, in which 'Life' is significantly symbolised by 'young love among the orange groves', illustrates the dream-like quality of Frédéric's journey. For *le rêve* plays the same part in his psychology as it does in Emma's. There is a continual movement away from comfortless actuality towards the 'orange groves' and the 'pays à noms sonores' of the dream-world. There are moments when the dream changes into an hallucination or a nightmare, as it does in the accounts of parties in both books. Actuality disintegrates to reveal the hideous and terrifying shapes of the nightmare:

'Presque toutes portaient un bouquet de violettes à la main. Le ton mat de leurs gants faisait ressortir la blancheur humaine de leurs bras; des effilés, des herbes, leur pendaient sur les épaules, et on croyait quelquefois, à certains frissonnements, que la robe allait tomber. Mais la décence des figures tempérait les provocations du costume; plusieurs même avaient une placidité presque bestiale, et ce rassemblement de femmes demi-nues faisait songer à un intérieur de harem . . . '

This illustrates very well the alternation of nightmare and reality. The procession of women with their violets suggests some strange rite which is emphasized by 'le ton mat de leurs gants', then relieved by the 'blancheur *humaine* de leurs bras'. The feeling that their clothing may suddenly fall off takes us back to the world of the nightmare where one's trousers are always falling down. We come back again to reality in 'la décence des figures' only to switch to the nightmare with its fearful shapes in 'une placidité presque bestiale' and the 'intérieur de harem'.

The best illustration of all, however, is the account of the fancy dress ball at the Maréchale's:

'Alors, toutes les femmes, assises autour du salon sur des banquettes, se levèrent à la file, prestement; et leurs jupes, leurs écharpes, leurs coiffures se mirent à tourner.

'Elles tournaient si près de lui, que Frédéric distinguait les gouttelettes de leur front;—et ce mouvement giratoire de plus en plus vif et régulier, vertigineux, communiquant à sa pensée une sorte d'ivresse, y faisait surgir d'autres images, tandis que toutes passaient dans le même éblouissement, et chacune avec une excitation particulière selon le genre de sa beauté. La Polonaise, qui s'abandonnait d'une façon langoureuse, lui inspirait l'envie de la tenir contre son coeur, en filant tous les deux dans un traîneau sur une plaine couverte de neige. Des horizons de volupté tranquille, au bord d'un lac, dans un chalet, se déroulaient sous les pas de la Suissesse, qui valsait le torse droit et les paupières baissées. Puis, tout à coup, la Bacchante, penchant en arrière sa tête brune, le faisait rêver à des caresses dévoratrices, dans des bois de lauriers-roses, par un temps d'orage, au bruit confus des tambourins . . . Mais la Débardeuse, dont les orteils légers effleuraient à peine le parquet, semblait recéler dans la souplesse de ses membres et le sérieux de son visage tous les raffinements de l'amour moderne, qui a la justesse d'une science et la mobilité d'un oiseau. Rosanette tournait, le poing sur la hanche; sa perruque à marteau, sautillant sur son collet, envoyait de la poudre d'iris autour d'elle; et, à chaque tour, du bout de ses éperons d'or, elle manquait d'attraper Frédéric'.

The ritual element is introduced by the dancers all filing into the ball-room. The connection between the 'mouvement giratoire de plus en plus vif et régulier, vertigineux' and the movement of the journeys is evident. Frédéric, as usual, is a spectator—naturally he does not dance—but this time it is life which revolves about him. Its shapes suddenly draw near to him, beckoning to him, then move away tantalisingly. The movement of the dance merges into the imagined movement of the sledge gliding over the snows, changes to the calm of a Swiss lake, then to the 'bois de lauriers-roses' and ends with the refinements of 'modern love'. Rosanette, who is described later among the débris of the party as 'fraîche comme au sortir d'un bain . . . les joues roses, les yeux brillants', is a symbol of the Natural Woman, and the way in which the points of her gold spurs keep just missing Frédéric stands for his intermittent contacts with reality.

I have dwelt at some length on passages which are not always in themselves of great intrinsic value because of the light that they throw on Flaubert's sensibility. Certain conclusions emerge from the analysis of these different passages. Flaubert had no gift for *direct* description. His descriptive prose is almost invariably dull and lifeless. His sensibility lacks freshness and he has no power of making us see material things in a new way or of selecting what is significant in the scene before him. His originality appears rather in sudden glimpses into the *moral* significance of a person

or a place such as we find in the comment on Rosanette's *cabinet de toilette*, in the critical appraisal of a section of society that we find in the account of la Vaubyessard or in the passages in which he reshapes feelings which are largely derived from his own reading, as he does in Emma's 'day-dream'. I think that we must go on to say that his sensibility was not simply limited and intermittent, but was undoubtedly defective. It was a sensibility which only touched life at comparatively few points, and we have seen from his descriptions of urban life that there was a wide variety of situations in which it failed to register at all.

The implications of this criticism are far-reaching. Mme. Dambreuse is practically the only character who has any roots in the society which Flaubert is studying and she is the only point at which there exists a tenuous relationship between Frédéric and this society. For one of the main weaknesses of the book is the gap between the account of Frédéric's *amours* and the account of society. The social life, the political meetings and the revolutions which Flaubert described so laboriously are no more than a drab and uninteresting background for what is after all a series of not very exciting liaisons.

These conclusions seem to me to be confirmed by the famous opening of Pt. III, Ch. vi:

> 'Il voyagea.
>
> 'Il connut la mélancolie des paquebots, les froids réveils sous la tente, l'étourdissement des paysages et des ruines, l'amertume des sympathies interrompues.
>
> 'Il revint.
>
> 'Il fréquenta le monde, et il eut d'autres amours encore. Mais le souvenir continuel du premier les lui rendait insipides; et puis la véhémence du désir, la fleur même de la sensation était perdue. Ses ambitions d'esprit avaient également diminué. Des années passèrent; et il supportait le désoeuvrement de son intelligence et l'inertie de son coeur'.

This is undoubtedly one of the most accomplished pieces of prose in the whole of Flaubert's work and in its way it is a complete success. For like the passage from *Madame Bovary* discussed earlier in this paper, it is an artistic whole. The feelings are completely dissolved into the images. There is no impression either that feelings are being released for which no adequate words can be found or that words are being used to conceal a failure of sensibility. The short, sharp sentence: 'Il voyagea' marks a break with the old life, the life which had ended with the violent death of Dussardier during the riots, and concentrates the attention on the 'remedy'. The 'blanks', which Proust rather perversely described as the most beautiful thing in the book, prolong the effect of the words, suggest long periods of time passing, vast distances traversed. The weariness and boredom of life on a liner lead to the cold and loneliness of camping expeditions in the desert.

Frédéric becomes the Romantic Traveller seeking escape from urban civilization; but, as we should expect of a hero whom his creator described in a moment of exasperation as 'l'homme de toutes les faiblesses', the famous sights—fresh landscapes, historic ruins—only produce a vague *étourdissement* in the blasé traveller. They are death-symbols which replace the life-symbols of Frédéric's earlier journeys. The attempt to escape from his own isolation, to integrate himself into society dissolves into 'l'amertume des sympathies interrompues'.

'Il revint' has the same emphasis as the opening sentence. It marks the failure to rebuild and the sudden return. The next sentence describes the resumption of the empty, frivolous life which had driven him away. The third explains the fundamental immaturity of his outlook and his love for Mme. Arnoux is seen for what it is—an adolescent admiration which has prevented development and adaptation. The remarkable phrase, 'et puis la véhémence du désir, la fleur même de la sensation était perdue', shows Flaubert—always more successful when describing disintegration and collapse—at his best. The sensation is presented with startling clarity, linking spiritual and physical destruction. The final sentence welds the two into a whole: 'le désoeuvrement de son intelligence et l'inertie de son coeur'.

The passage has the internal coherence and economy of a seventeenth-century *tirade*, moving with mathematical precision from one feeling to another, from the mood of boredom and loneliness to the mood of complete vacuity. The friction between one set of feelings and another ends by destroying all feeling. It was because Flaubert excelled in descriptions of *inertie* that the second part of the passage is still more impressive than the first. His symbolist technique was never used with better effect. A whole life is crowded into these few sentences. It is an admirable example of Flaubert's art certainly, but it knocks the rest of the book sideways, standing out with a sombre splendour against a drab and colourless background.

'It is the tragedy of nobody in particular', Mr. Edmund Wilson wrote of *l'Education sentimentale*, 'but of the poor human race itself reduced to such ineptitude, such cowardice, such weak irresolution—arriving, with so many fine notions in its head, so many noble words on its lips, at a failure which is all the more memorable because those who have failed are hardly conscious of having done so'.[4]

Flaubert would have been highly gratified by these kind words; but though they may very well describe his intention, they seem to me to underline the immense gap between intention and execution. For his characters simply will not bear the social significance that he tries to attach to them. The doubts that one felt about *Madame Bovary* become certainties. *L'Education sentimentale* seems to me to be profoundly lacking in the famous

[4] *Op. cit.* pp. 113-4.

French maturity, in that wisdom which is so abundantly present in *Adolphe* and gives it its immense stature among modern novels. All Flaubert's characters—the principals as well as the minor characters—are *ratés*. They are doomed to failure from the start, but no one is less able than their creator to explain how or why this is so.

While I do not feel able to share Mr. Wilson's high opinion of the book, I do not think that it can be dismissed as a worthless failure, as a mere example of the *platitude bourgeoise*, as some critics would have us believe.[5] It is a work of importance in its way and for many of Flaubert's admirers it remains his masterpiece. For these readers it is a great book because it seems to them to express better than any other the contemporary 'mess', the widespread disillusionment which has followed the collapse of traditional beliefs. The book does, to be sure, leave us with a sense of waste, a slow corrosion spreading over all feeling; but we also have the impression that the situation is an artificial one which depends on an incomplete analysis of the *données* and that the true explanation is to be found in the aberrations of the author's own personality, in the cultivation of a highly refined sentimentality which is concealed behind a certain bluntness, a certain matter-of-factness in the writing.

French critics may have valid reasons for their preference, but I find something sad in the excessive admiration for the book in Anglo-Saxon countries, and the readiness to accept its author as the interpreter of the modern world to itself seems to be the sign of a fundamental lack of self-confidence. There is no doubt that Anglo-Saxon readers are altogether too inclined to identify themselves uncritically with Flaubert's characters, to admire them because they are *ratés*, to see in them the reflection of their own personal failures.

V.

The Flaubert legend was the product of an age in which the Religion of Art was triumphant and which was inclined to speak a trifle too easily of *le Beau* as the end of all art and of style as though it existed independently of works of art. It is worth recalling that Flaubert's early admirers thought of him as the great Artist, the great Stylist rather than as a great novelist. The strange man who shut himself up all day in his study devouring innumerable text-books in his hunt for material for *Salammbô*

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[5]Compare Henry James's view:

> '*L'Education sentimentale* is in comparison with *Madame Bovary* mechanical and inanimate . . . the book is in a single word a *dead* one. *Madame Bovary* was spontaneous and sincere; but to read its successor is, to the finer sense, like masticating ashes and sawdust . . . elaborately and massively dreary'. (*French Poets and Novelists*, pp. 203, 209-10).

and *Bouvard et Pécuchet*, drumming with his fingers on the table to get the rhythm of his sentences right and producing, on good days, perhaps a few pages after intolerable labour, could not but appeal to his own age.

Flaubert's admirers were certainly right in insisting that it is his style after all which counts, but the stylist has provoked the same violent differences of opinion as the social critic. When Gourmont tells us that it is the perfect style and Proust retorts that 'there is not, perhaps, a single fine metaphor in the whole of Flaubert',[6] we may feel that there is something wrong. I suspect that both critics were thinking too exclusively of the purple patches which appealed so greatly to the Romantic aftermath and so little to the twentieth century. Flaubert's originality does not lie in his descriptions of nature or in his moonlight seductions, but in a different direction:

> 'C'était une de ces coiffures d'ordre composite, où l'on retrouve les éléments du bonnet à poil, du chapska, du chapeau rond, de la casquette de loutre et du bonnet de coton, une de ces pauvres choses, enfin, dont la laideur muette a des profondeurs d'expression comme le visage d'un imbécile'.

This description of the young Charles Bovary's hat is also a description of the man that he will become—a ridiculous and pathetic figure who is totally unable to deal with the problem of his unbalanced wife.

We are told of Emma at the climax of her liaison with Rodolphe:

> 'On eût dit qu'un artiste habile en corruptions avait disposé sur sa nuque la torsade de ses cheveux: ils s'enroulaient en une masse lourde, négligemment, et selon les hasards de l'adultère, qui les dénouait tous les jours'.

The mass of hair which is unloosed everyday 'selon les hasards de l'adultère' is a symbol of the process of interior disintegration which has already begun and is ironically contrasted with her outer well-being, with 'Elle s'épanouissait enfin dans la plénitude de sa nature'.

Flaubert obtained some of his most striking effects by his skilful manipulation of the imperfect and the past definite, by those arresting short sentences or those adverbs placed at the end of a sentence after a comma. The famous close of *Hérodias* describes the slaves carrying away the head of St. John the Baptist:

> 'Comme elle était très lourde, ils la portaient alternativement'.

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[6] *Chroniques*, Paris, 1927, p. 193.

—where the use of the imperfect and final adverb have the effect not merely of prolonging movement, but of suggesting unending movement through space.

In another place he writes:

> 'Ce fut comme une apparition:
> Elle était assise, au milieu du banc, toute seule . . . '

This is Frédéric's first sight of Mme. Arnoux. The five opening words mark a sudden change of tempo and fix the attention on the apparition, compellingly. The punctuation of the next clause intensifies the impression, making us feel the onlooker, who is completely *ébloui*, coming back to his senses and slowly taking in the details of the scene.

Flaubert possessed a distinctive style certainly, but one only has to read a few pages to notice how largely he depends on devices which are constantly in danger of degenerating into tricks. Even when he is most successful he leaves us with a vague uneasiness, a feeling: 'Yes, it's very brilliant, but it seems to lack something'. In writing of him, I have been struck by the way in which words like 'accomplished', 'device', 'trick' and 'successful in its way' naturally suggest themselves to the mind, and even in discussing his finest passages I have felt a reluctance to declare firmly: 'This is great prose'. There is a continual contrast—it is here that Flaubert reminds me of Jules Laforgue—between the maturity of expression and the immaturity of the feelings expressed. We feel that the fine passages are the result not of an original sensibility forging its own instrument, but of artful contrivance, of technical accomplishment pushed to its furthest limit.

There is an account of Emma's meetings with Charles during their engagement which is worth looking at:

> 'Elle le reconduisait toujours jusqu'à la première marche du perron. Lorsqu'on n'avait pas encore amené son cheval, elle restait là. On s'était dit adieu, on ne parlait plus; le grand air l'entourait, levant pêle-mêle les petits cheveux follets de sa nuque, ou secouant sur sa hanche les cordons de son tablier, qui se tortillaient comme des banderoles. Une fois, par un temps de dégel, l'écorce des arbres suintait dans la cour, la neige sur les couvertures des bâtiments se fondait. Elle était sur le seuil; elle alla chercher son ombrelle, elle l'ouvrit. L'ombrelle, de soie gorge-de-pigeon, que traversait le soleil, éclairait de reflets mobiles la peau blanche de sa figure. Elle souriait là-dessous à la chaleur tiède; et on entendait les gouttes d'eau, une à une, tomber sur la moire tendue'.

Henry James and Mr. Murry have both paid tribute to this passage with its vowel sounds, its delicate rhythms all leading up to the final image of the drops falling, one by one, 'sur la moire tendue'. Certainly it is one of the loveliest passages that Flaubert ever wrote, a passage which no anthologist could resist; but it cannot for a moment be pretended that it is an organic part of the

book; it is simply there, a splendid piece of virtuosity, bearing little relation to anything which went before or comes after it. It is a description of an early spring day which is remarkable for its freshness and its delicate artistry. The reasons for its success are not altogether without interest. It succeeds because it does not try to do too much, because its language is simple and it does not attempt to convey any profound experience. This is brought home when we compare it with a more ambitious passage in which Flaubert tries to disentangle complex feelings:

> 'Le lendemain fut, pour Emma, une journée funèbre. Tout lui parut enveloppé par une atmosphère noire qui flottait confusément sur l'extérieur des choses, et le chagrin s'engouffrait dans son âme avec des hurlements doux, comme fait le vent d'hiver dans les châteaux abandonnés. C'était cette rêverie que l'on a sur ce qui ne reviendra plus, la lassitude qui vous prend après chaque fait accompli, cette douleur, enfin, que vous apportent l'interruption de tout mouvement accoutumé, la cessation brusque d'une vibration prolongée'.

This is from the chapter describing Emma's feelings after Léon's departure for Paris. The first sentence is unexceptionable. It is when the novelist sets to work to probe the mood that his difficulties begin. The 'atmosphère noire' might pass, but we naturally expect it to be broken up into its component parts and clarified by what follows. It is here that the first breakdown occurs. For what are we to think of 'le chagrin qui s'engouffrait dans son âme avec des hurlements doux?' It does not seem to bear much relation to the 'atmosphère noire', but to be a fresh start, another statement *about* Emma's feelings. Flaubert's metaphor, so far from illuminating what is happening in Emma's mind, is an evasion of the difficulty. This impression is strengthened by the wind blowing through the abandoned châteaux. It is a romantic cliché which introduces ready-made feelings and solicits a response which has nothing to do with Emma or Léon.[7] The opening of the next sentence is no more than an amplification of the romantic aura which has been introduced from without and is extraneous to the situation. The *rêverie* and the *lassitude* are both borrowings from the vocabulary of the Romantics and their history is not a very creditable one. 'Cette douleur, enfin' seems to betray a sense that something is wrong, as though the writer were saying: 'I know the *atmosphère noire* and the *chagrin* are a bit vague, but you know what I mean—*douleur*, that's the word I'm after'. He is right of course. The last eleven words succeed in expressing exactly how Emma felt, and *douleur* is as good a label as any other; but it is idle to pretend that they have any logical connection with what has gone before.

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[7]Compare: ' . . . ses images sont généralement si faibles qu'elles ne s'élèvent guère au-dessus de celles que pourraient trouver ses personnages les plus insignifiants'. Proust, *Op. cit.* pp. 193-4.

There is another example on the next page:

> 'Dès lors, ce souvenir de Léon fut comme le centre de son ennui; il y pétillait plus fort que, dans un steppe de Russie, un feu de voyageurs abandonné sur la neige'.

The opening phrase is admirable in its clarity, but the cliché which follows ruins its effect. 'Le centre de son ennui' is a precise statement of the relations between Emma and Léon and the part his memory plays in her emotional life; but instead of developing its implications, the comparison with the fire burning in the steppes allows its force to evaporate. It is simply a repetition of the opening statement in much less impressive terms. The 'steppe de Russie' is a mere counter; it has none of the emotive life of Racine's 'Orient désert'. It is, unfortunately, characteristic of Flaubert's metaphors that instead of concentrating, they tend to disperse emotion.

There is a still more interesting instance in *l'Education sentimentale*:

> 'La contemplation de cette femme [Mme. Arnoux] l'énervait, comme l'usage d'un parfum trop fort. Cela descendit dans les profondeurs de son tempérament et devenait presque une manière générale de sentir, un mode nouveau d'exister'.

It is a perfect example of the contrast between the maturity of expression and the immaturity of the feelings expressed. There is no valid relation between the 'manière générale de sentir' and the 'parfum trop fort'. The relation is a purely grammatical one and is only made possible by the sleight of hand in 'Cela descendit dans les profondeurs de son tempérament'.

Flaubert's achievement consists very largely in the invention of a technique for displaying a self-consciousness of a new kind, an intimate awareness not only of the individual's own feelings or of his environment, but of the constantly changing effect of other people on him, the endless variations of mood—sudden inexplicable joy, sudden inexplicable sadness, sudden unmotivated *ennui*. It is Flaubert's sense of the intimate play of feeling and of the individual's inability to control or direct his feelings which has had such a decisive influence on later novelists, particularly on Henry James and Conrad and, at a different level, on Virginia Woolf. James and Conrad were both far greater writers than their master, but their approach to the problem of human relationships was essentially the one practised by Flaubert and it is inconceivable that they could have produced the masterpieces they did without his example.

The excellence of 'le centre de son ennui' and 'une manière générale de sentir', which bear the stamp of a great tradition, underlines the fatal lack of precision in Flaubert's language when he turns to the detailed analysis of a mood. A *tirade* of Racine's, a chapter of Constant or Stendhal resembles a mathematical formula. A mood or emotion is gradually broken up into its

component parts and with each step our understanding of the character's feelings deepens. It is only occasionally that Flaubert is successful. He does not work at a deep level and his successes lie for the most part in the presentation of secondary feelings, in the analysis of comparatively simple states of mind which enables him to make articulate feelings which had been missed by less self-conscious artists. 'Emma', we are told, 'cherchait à savoir ce que l'on entendait au juste dans la vie par les mots de *félicité*, de *passion*, et d'*ivresse*, qui lui avaient paru si beaux dans les livres'. It is a neat description of one of her creator's central problems. The basic emotions—*ennui*, *chagrin*, *tristesse* and the rest—never are defined. They are words of limitation which prevent analysis from being brought to bear on the deeper levels of the mind. It is for this reason that Flaubert's principal characters are strangely lacking in centrality. They are not genuine creations, but a series of different and sometimes conflicting moods which are arbitrarily labelled 'Emma' or 'Frédéric'. They are in the main composed of feelings which are borrowed from the Romantics or from the novelist's personal experience and are not always transmuted into something new. It may have been this failure to penetrate life that Flaubert was thinking of when he spoke of his own lack of *innéité*.

The failure was not purely a personal one, but was caused by changes which had taken place in French sensibility. In one of his most provocative essays, Rivière has traced the vagueness which he found in the Surréalistes through Mallarmé back to Flaubert. He points out that in Flaubert the French language was already beginning to lose its ancient power of translating perceptions into words and the intellect was no longer capable of unravelling the findings of sensibility with the same sureness as before. It is true that Flaubert 'works' words in a way that reminds us of Mallarmé, so that in spite of an added colour and variety his scope is narrowed in the process. It was a situation in which only a very great writer could have succeeded and Flaubert did not possess either the character or the intelligence which would have enabled a writer of the first magnitude to triumph over the very real difficulties.

Mr. Murry has spoken of Flaubert as 'a broad, big-boned, lovable, rather simple-minded man, with the look and the laugh of a farmer'. It seems to me that Flaubert was indeed born with a certain native strength and directness, a toughness commonly associated with the Norman, but that these natural qualities became atrophied by excessive self-analysis and his sensibility blunted by his cloistered, bookish life.[8] For every now and then simple, direct

[8] 'Un amour normal, régulier, nourri et solide, me sortirait trop hors de moi, me troublerait, je rentrerais dans le sens commun enfin, et c'est ce qui m'a été nuisible toutes les fois que j'ai voulu le tenter'. (Letter to Le Poittevin, end of June or beginning of July, 1845, *Op. cit.*, p. 186).

feelings do break through the mannered prose and we catch a glimpse of a different and in many ways a more impressive Flaubert who might have made a more enduring contribution to literature. These qualities are most apparent in the short story, *Un Coeur simple*. The passages which follow are from Flaubert's account of Félicité:

> 'Elle se levait dès l'aube, pour ne pas manquer la messe, et travaillait jusqu'au soir sans interruption; puis, le dîner étant fini, la vaisselle en ordre et la porte bien close, elle enfouissait la bûche sous les cendres et s'endormait devant l'âtre, son rosaire à la main. Personne, dans les marchandages, ne montrait plus d'entêtement. Quant à la propreté, le poli de ses casseroles faisait le désespoir des autres servantes. Économe, elle mangeait avec lenteur, et recueillait du doigt sur la table les miettes de son pain,—un pain de douze livres, cuit exprès pour elle, et qui durait vingt jours.
>
> 'En toute saison elle portait un mouchoir d'indienne fixé dans le dos par une épingle, un bonnet lui cachant les cheveux, des bas gris, un jupon rouge, et par-dessus sa camisole un tablier à bavette, comme les infirmières d'hôpital.
>
> 'Son visage était maigre et sa voix aiguë. A vingt-cinq ans, on lui en donnait quarante. Dès la cinquantaine, elle ne marqua plus aucun âge;—et, toujours silencieuse, la taille droite et les gestes mesurés, semblait une femme en bois, fonctionnant d'une manière automatique'.

Un Coeur simple is Flaubert's only perfect work of art. It is the only one of his books in which he was content to be himself, to write directly from his experience, and it is free from the weaknesses which spoil the novels. Félicité has a poise, a centrality which are lacking in Emma and Frédéric. Flaubert has achieved for once a genuine artistic detachment, has managed to portray the enduring qualities of the Norman peasant. There is no gap between the character and the milieu. Félicité is firmly rooted in the community and she is convincing in a way that practically no other character of Flaubert's is. There is no hesitation, no fumbling. She is simply there.

In this passage every word is right. Her piety, her industry, her hard bargaining and simple life, her essential toughness—they are all there. The 'femme en bois, fonctionnant d'une manière automatique' is an example of Flaubert's personal imagery which for once is an undeniable success. It reinforces the 'recueillait du doigt sur la table les miettes de son pain', and the slow, deliberate gesture is admirably brought out by the placing of the words and the punctuation. Superficially, *Un Coeur simple* expresses the same *tristesse* as the novels, but the experience seems to me to be of a different quality, to be both deeper and more mature.

There is another passage in the story which deserves attention:

'Elle avait eu, comme une autre, son histoire d'amour . . .
'Ils se rencontraient au fond des cours, derrière un mur, sous un arbre isolé. Elle n'était pas innocente à la manière des demoiselles,—les animaux l'avaient instruite;—mais la raison et l'instinct de l'honneur l'empêchèrent de faillir'.

It would not be possible to improve upon the economy and directness of this, and Flaubert's matter-of-factness adds to its effectiveness. Once again every word is right and in the right place. The *raison* and the *honneur* stand for robust moral certitudes and the contrast with *demoiselles* gives *innocente* exactly the right nuance. 'Les animaux l'avaient instruite' stands for something which is normal and healthy, and the contrast with the unhealthy imaginings of Emma and Frédéric, which give the novels their torrid sex-laden atmosphere, is striking:

' . . . et tout à coup, devant cette femme laide qui avait dans sa taille des ondulations de panthère, Frédéric sentit une convoitise énorme, un désir de volupté bestiale'.

Emma's experience is more harrowing:

' . . . d'autres fois, brûlée plus fort par cette flamme intime que l'adultère avivait, haletante, émue, tout en désir, elle ouvrait sa fenêtre, aspirait l'air froid, éparpillait au vent sa chevelure trop lourde, et, regardant les étoiles, souhaitait des amours de prince'.

I have used the word 'harrowing' intentionally. For here, as in parts of *A la recherche du temps perdu*, we feel that emotion has not been transformed into artistic experience. We are in contact with something savage and primeval which is extraneous to the novel.

It is the repression of normal feelings which explains the strain of brutality which runs through nearly all Flaubert's works, the glee with which he dwells on the word *adultère* or tells us 'N'importe! Elle n'était pas heureuse, ne l'avait jamais été'. It explains too the 'pointe d'imagination sadique' which Sainte-Beuve discerned in *Salammbô*—that strange sadistic orgy—and which drew a hurt protest from Flaubert.[9]

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[9]V. his letter of December, 1862, printed in the Appendix to the definitive edition of *Salammbô*. He did not deny the charge, but remonstrated with Sainte-Beuve on the ground that this suggestion might harm the reputation of a writer who had already been prosecuted for writing an immoral book.

This criticism applies with far more force to *la Tentation de Saint-Antoine* which can, perhaps, only be discussed at the psychoanalytical level. The following samples speak for themselves:

'Avec une pierre tranchante il [Atys] s'émascule, puis se met à courir furieux, en levant dans l'air son membre coupé'.
'Alors un vertige prend les Dieux. Ils chancellent, tombent

'Flaubert', wrote M. Stanislas Fumet in an interesting essay, 'Flaubert pèse l'âme, il la mesure, il en découpe les aspects, il cherche sur sa palette une couleur pour chaque vibration et il faut reconnaître que de temps en temps, c'est beau comme du Manet, mais on s'arrête au style, à la forme, c'est un tableau, avec son cadre, ce n'est plus de la vie incontrôlée'.[10]

The balance sheet is an interesting one. When we look at Flaubert's three principal works as a whole, we are struck at one and the same time by their variety and their monotony. He did not possess a style in the assured sense of the classic artist. He was the product of an age of experiment and its instability is reflected in the different styles in which he wrote. His books are in the main a series of tableaux, a patchwork of different moods. There are impressive scenes, penetrating psychological aperçus, but they remain unco-ordinated or, as M. Fumet puts it, *la vie incontrôlée* is absent. We have the impression that many of the scenes are not simply composed from without, but that instead of following one another inevitably in response to some inner compulsion, the artist has carefully arranged a series of pictures round his studio so that they will catch the best light. It is this, perhaps, which explains the sense of hollowness at the centre, the moral confusion of these books. Flaubert often displays glimpses of genuine moral insight, but they are glimpses and no more. He remains unable to organize them and tries to fill the gap by imposing a conventional morality which is totally at variance with his fundamental nihilism and which is expressed in the endless repetition of the word *adultère*.

VI.

'C'est ce genre de tristesse, fait de la rupture des habitudes et de l'irréalité du décor', wrote Proust, 'que donne le style de Flaubert, ce style si nouveau quand ce ne serait que par là'.[11] A certain clumsiness of expression is, perhaps, in danger of obscuring genuine profundity here. For Proust's comment contains three separate observations which together go to the heart of Flaubert's experience and explain his hold over contemporary readers.

'La rupture des habitudes' echoes some words of Flaubert's which I have already quoted: Emma's 'l'interruption de tout mouvement accoutumé, la cessation brusque d'une vibration prolongée' and Frédéric's 'l'amertume des sympathies inter-

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en convulsions, et vomissent leurs existences . . . Ils arrachent leurs attributs, leurs sexes . . .

'Et il [Hilarion] lui fait voir, tout au fond de l'avenue sur le seuil d'une grotte illuminée, un bloc de pierre représentant l'organe sexuel d'une femme'.

[10] *Problèmes du roman*, p. 272.

[11] *Op. cit.* p. 199.

rompues'. Almost all Flaubert's principal characters are people whose ties with the community in which they were born have been broken and who try in vain to rebuild their lives through fresh personal relationships. One after another these relationships break down and the characters are oppressed by a sense of their own rootlessness and isolation, of living in a world in which they have no part.

This sensation is closely linked with what Proust calls 'l'irréalité du décor'. For I suspect that he was referring to that absence of any organic relation between material things and their tendency to disintegrate to which I have drawn attention. This double breakdown of personal and material relations, this feeling of imminent collapse, 'cette pourriture instantanée des choses où elle s'appuyait', produces the pervasive *tristesse* which gives Flaubert's work its distinctive tone.

There are several respects in which we may concede that Flaubert introduced 'presque une manière générale de sentir', but though his *tristesse* is the most famous, it seems to me to be in many ways the least valuable and to have been responsible for a great deal of the over-valuation of his novels and particularly of *l'Education sentimentale*. The word is too comprehensive and, in so far as it suggests that a single emotion is common to all Flaubert's books, it is misleading. It is used for lack of a better term to describe experiences which differ considerably in value. It is applied equally to the valid emotions that we experience in reading the best parts of *Madame Bovary* and *Un Coeur simple*, and to the most 'massively dreary' parts of *l'Education sentimentale*. With the exception of a few scenes, the *tristesse* of *l'Education sentimentale* is personal in a bad sense. It does not arise from the contemplation of events; it is generated from within and envelops the events which the novelist is describing. It is the vagueness of this central experience which creates the illusion of actuality and which makes is so seductive, a continual invitation to the reader to read into it his personal disappointments, his own unhappy love affairs, his own world weariness.

There is one further point which deserves consideration. Flaubert's work sometimes appears to inaugurate an epoch which reaches its logical conclusion in the novelists of the Existential School in spite of their repudiation of his patronage. We must, however, distinguish. The work of MM. Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus is largely a clinical study of the emotional bankruptcy of the middle classes which we may call in Flaubert's words 'l'inertie de son coeur' or 'atrophie sentimentale'. The Existential novelists are describing *people* whose emotions have simply collapsed altogether and who have become *étrangers*[12] in the society in which they are living because instead of reacting normally to normal situations, they fail to react at all. Flaubert's characters, on the other hand, reflect the *novelist's* failure to penetrate the

[12]See M. Albert Camus' remarkable novel, *l'Etranger*, Paris, 1942.

core of experience and to differentiate between one experience and another. He simply transmits his own emotional poverty to them without proper critical examination. The clearsightedness with which the contemporary novelists face the problem and the difference between Sartre's *nausée* and Flaubert's *tristesse* help us to understand some of the ways in which Flaubert failed as a novelist.

In spite of its faults, *Madame Bovary* remains a remarkable novel, but place it for a moment beside *Adolphe* or *le Rouge et le noir* and the contrast is glaring. All the older novelists started with a belief in man. Their definition might be limited as Mme. de La Fayette's was; it might be incomplete as Laclos' was, or it might be a bold essay in the exploration of a particular emotional problem which is only complete on the last page of the book, as Constant's solitary masterpiece is. Yet all these writers had an answer to the question: 'What is man?' The result is that there is no faltering, no blur in their work. Their books belong to a great tradition and each of them has a place in it; each one takes us a stage further in the unending voyage of discovery, adding something to our knowledge of human nature.

It was left to Flaubert to proclaim that his particular vocation was to pull down what they had built. 'J'ai pris plaisir', he said in one of his letters,[13] 'à combattre mes sens et à me torturer le coeur. J'ai refusé les ivresses humaines qui s'offraient. Acharné contre moi-même, je déracine l'homme à deux mains, deux mains pleines de force et d'orgueil. De cet arbre au feuillage verdoyant, je voulais faire une colonne toute nue pour y poser tout en haut, comme sur un autel, je ne sais quelle flamme céleste'.

There is something disconcerting here about the violence of the destructive process, the savage satisfaction which he derives from 'je déracine l'homme à deux mains, deux mains pleines de force et d'orgueil', and the extreme vagueness of the goal, of the 'je ne sais quelle flamme céleste'. His work is a reversal of the Cartesian *Cogito*: 'I do not think, therefore I am not. Je doute de tout et même de mon doute.—Je ne crois à rien, pas même à moi, ce qui est rare'. Over and over again in reading him, I am struck by his complete uncertainty on all fundamental issues, by an incapacity for social thinking and by a lack of what I can only call intelligence. He had no gift for constructive thought. His books contain shrewd comments on society, but they are invariably destructive. He hated the bourgeoisie, from which he sprang and which provided him with the materials of his art, and he hated the proletariat. He seems like Baudelaire to have been at heart a patrician, but his appreciation of the achievements of aristocracy is of a different order from that displayed by Baudelaire in the lucid notes in his diaries. His work betrays a progressive loss of all sense of positive values and an increasing tendency to dramatize his private manias which are pushed to their extreme limit in *Bouvard et Pécuchet*.

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[13]Quoted by Mauriac, *op. cit.* p. 157.

All this can be said, but Flaubert remains a figure of capital importance in the development of the novel. When you criticize the little man his work simply disappears, but the great writer possesses a toughness and a resilience which enable him to survive criticism. You can criticize Flaubert's uncertainty and confusion, his defective sensibility and his emotional poverty, but a great deal still remains. I think we should add that a great deal remains for which we must feel grateful, particularly at a time when the novel of personal relationships, which was peculiarly Flaubert's field, threatens to give place to novels describing the mass movements of what he contemptuously called 'the ignoble worker'. It is difficult to insist on his technical originality without the risk of giving a false impression. Technical development can never be a purely mechanical process. An advance in technique means that a writer has discovered a new way of regarding and presenting experience. What is startling in Flaubert is the immense gap between the elaborate apparatus which he devised and the comparatively uninteresting experiences which are in fact presented. We cannot escape the conclusion that he marks the point at which the focus shifts from the artist's experience to his method. His technical innovations have been extremely fruitful; but when we compare him with Henry James and Conrad, with Proust or even with Joyce, it is difficult to see any community of feeling between them. The relationship is a technical one; they have borrowed and perfected the tools which he forged to give an incomparably finer expression to their experience than would otherwise have been possible. If his emotional development had kept pace with his technical development, he would have been one of the greatest novelists of all time. As it is, he seems to me to be a great technician, a great literary engineer rather than a great novelist.

MARTIN TURNELL.

GOETHE'S 'FAUST' AND THE WRITTEN WORD

(III) *THE SECOND PART*

> '. . . Besides, after this continuation of *Faust*, which they tell me is very poor, who can have courage to attempt a reversal of the judgment of all criticism against continuations?'—(Coleridge on his reason for not finishing *Christabel*, in *Table Talk*).

I MUST again preface these notes with an apology for the somewhat elementary mode of procedure which governs them; and with a warning, too, that it is impossible for the critic to present neat and final conclusions about *The Second Part of Faust*, a proverbially enigmatic and critic-confounding work. I cannot undertake to provide answers for all the questions I may pose in the course of this commentary (I hesitate to call it an 'interpretation' because so much of the time the reader must deliberately *avoid* interpretation), and the immediate question facing the student of the *Second Part*—whether and how it can be said to be a continuation of the plot-system (discussed in *Scrutiny* for Spring, 1945) which draws the verse of the *First Part* so tightly together—is probably one that ought properly to be left to the 'concensus of informed opinion'; if only there were such a thing in this case.

However forewarned the reader may be about the vast difference between the two parts of the drama, it is only natural that he should approach the *Second Part* rather in the spirit of a novel-reader passing from Volume I to Volume II (I mean, of course, a *good* novel), and not only natural, but right, too. Since, as I shall do my best to indicate, the two *are* integrant parts of a whole (for neither is complete without the other), although the relation between them is not sufficiently 'organized' to justify the use of the word 'organic'. Perhaps the relation which the parts bear each other may be best hinted at through metaphor: certainly they cannot be said to form one straight line which, begun in the *First Part* and carried further in the *Second*, points directly to a clear-cut system of belief which for convenience we will call the 'message'. Rather, they resemble the concentric circles formed by a pebble thrown into water: the *First Part* is 'closer' to the original meaning or animating principle, while the *Second*, like the outer circle with its breaking outline and its wider sweep, indicates less plainly what was its first cause. Thus Croce, for example, is (I think fairly obviously) quite wrong in describing the *Second Part* as 'a work apart', while even my metaphor of concentric circles suggests a simpler relation between the two plays

than actually obtains during much of the later work. Goethe's own remark on this matter, though it tells us very little, will serve as a stepping-off point:

> 'The first part is almost entirely subjective; it proceeded entirely from a perplexed, impassioned individual, and his semi-darkness is probably highly pleasing to mankind. But, in the second part, there is scarcely anything of the subjective; here is seen a higher, broader, clearer, more passionless world, and he who has not looked about him and had some experience, will not know what to make of it'.

The description is, in its way, accurate enough; what must be discussed, and with a conscientious carefulness and persistent self-questioning, is whether a work which is certainly 'more passionless' can truly be 'higher, broader and clearer' as well.

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ACT I: A PLEASANT REGION.

Goethe's comment on the beginning of the *Second Part*—'as though everything were covered with a cloak of pardon'—is an excellent summing-up. The radical change of tone strikes us, most forcibly, in the very first lines, the song of Ariel ('accompanied with Aeolian harps') who is a patently amoral sprite. His troop of 'little elves', following on the stark scene in Gretchen's death-cell, are more than a little difficult to stomach . . . and we feel no easier when we hear Ariel's instructions to his colleagues who hover above the sleeping Faust:

> Besänftiget des Herzens grimmen Strauss,
> Entfernt des Vorwurfs glühend bittre Pfeile,
> Sein Innres reinigt von erlebtem Graus!
>
> (Soothe the violent struggle in his heart, withdraw the burning, bitter arrows of remorse, and purge his spirit of experienced horror).

So the past is to be absolved and obliterated; there is to be no continuity of experience, no growth of self-knowledge, no deductions drawn from that terrible mental state in which we left him, distraught, after the meeting with Gretchen in the condemned cell. Which is to say that there is to be, after all, no development in Faust's moral powers: only, as it were, a schoolboy scrumping of all the redeeming fruits of experience by an ambiguous species of fairy who has as little to do with Mephisto as with the Lord:

> Erst senkt sein Haupt aufs kühle Polster nieder,
> Dann badet ihn im Thau aus Lethe's Fluth
>
> (First lay his head down on the cool pillow, then bathe him in dew from Lethe's flood).

Here we may well begin to wonder whether the 'dim urgency' which the Lord ascribed to Faust in the *Prologue in Heaven*[1] can be so dim that the Gretchen tragedy is permitted to slip into oblivion . . . or whether it is meant to be so urgent that, despite the total loss of this profitable lesson, it will still grow more and more articulate.

Ariel's final injunction adds the finishing touch to our bewilderment:

> Vollbringt der Elfen schönste Pflicht,
> Gebt ihn zurück dem heiligen Licht.
>
> (Fulfil the elves' finest duty: return him to the holy light).

To the holy light? Our puritanical consciences insist that 'holy light' can break only on a Faust who is conscious of sin and contrite; and it is only by exercising the kind of ingenuity which will later land him in a pretty mess that the reader dare suggest that, Faust being such an excitable creature, perhaps his remorse would be too immoderate to be of any value to him or anyone else, and so, if horror is merely self-tormenting darkness, then forgetfulness might indeed be described as 'holy light'. And we have learnt, admittedly, from the *First Part*, that Goethe was a very *practical* moralist who saw little profit in crying over spilt milk (let alone drowning oneself in it, as Faust would be likely to do); we remember, too, that the spirit who tormented Gretchen with memories of her happy, lost innocence was a 'böser Geist', an *evil* spirit.[2] However faint it may be, this implication that excessive remorse may be no more than a variant of the cardinal sin, stagnation in a halted moment of time, will certainly help us to accept, if still dubiously, the fresh, energetic and seemingly callous Faust whom we now meet.

But the very appearance of Ariel and his company brings to the fore another readjustment which we must make before we plunge into the *Second Part* (half as long again as the earlier section, incidentally); this is more difficult, because it is more radical and because we have no real precedent to help us. In the *First Part* we were concerned solely with the development of a human soul in the context of action and morality, but in the bulk of the *Second Part* we shall be concerned primarily with something altogether larger and vaguer: the development of *the* human spirit

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[1] 'Ein guter Mensch in seinem dunkeln Drange/Ist sich des rechten Weges wohl bewusst'.

[2] *Cf.* Eckermann's *Conversations*, May 29, 1831:

> 'Goethe told me of a boy who could not console himself after he had committed a trifling fault. "I was sorry to observe this", said he, "for it shows a too tender conscience, which values so highly its own moral self that it will excuse nothing in it. Such a conscience makes hypochondriacal men, if it is not balanced by great activity" '.

in the context of action and time . . . time measured in centuries and action which strays through ancient countries of the mind, from the Holy Roman Empire into a Greece peopled with sphinxes and griffins and centaurs and Fates. For now Faust must be not only a struggling mediaeval philosopher but also a symbol for the struggling spirit of that amorphous concept, the human race; most obviously, of course, when as Mediaeval Culture (or Spirit, or Art, alas) he mates with Helen, the symbol of classical culture, to bring forth 'Euphorion'-Byron as 'modern' poetry where romantic and classical merge together, each working upon the other. Not surprisingly, these two rôles do not run smoothly in double-harness; if by that word 'smoothly' we mean that Faust is to represent and further both of his meanings simultaneously and continuously, then Goethe's plan was foredoomed to failure. But the critic's task—it could hardly be more delicate—is to determine the precise total effect of an undertaking which does not aim at simple success of this kind.

The fact that Faust is now playing a double rôle suggests that we must prepare ourselves for certain other far-reaching changes. Most important, we can no longer expect the sustained preoccupation with the idea of developing moral power which we found in the *First Part*: morality is a matter pertaining to the individual person and we perceive that the larger the congregation of individuals the less relevant the concept of morality becomes[3] until, in a consideration of the human race as a whole, it has no meaning whatsoever. We cannot easily attribute the downfall of Greek civilization to human wrong-doing, let alone pass sentence on ourselves for usurping the throne of the evolutionary series through our superior cunning. But, side by side with the story of mankind's cultural development (as amoral as Ariel's sprites), the story of Faust's moral development continues to unfold, however remotely at times, however spasmodically. Goethe's dogmatic aphorism, 'Where I cease to be moral I have no more power', will serve to remind us of this secondary (but for most of us primary) theme.

Just as there cannot be any talk of morality in a 'poetic history' of the human race, neither can there be any place for tragedy. Tragedy, too, is a quality of individuals; even metaphorically speaking, only those extinct species who, like the pterodactyl and the pliosaurus, were unable to come to terms with their environment, can be said to have experienced tragedy. Let us just consider that famous remark of Goethe's, a perhaps unfortunate remark (it occurred in a letter to a friend):

> 'I was not born to be a tragic poet, my nature is too conciliating; hence no really tragic situation interests me, for it is in its essence irreconcilable'.

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[3]Most rational intelligences will admit that, for instance, one cannot properly talk about the immorality or morality of the German *people*.

I call it an unfortunate remark because so many commentators seem to have read it as a naïve confession of inability to stomach a tragic situation however inevitable it may be; then, when their personal prejudices cry out against the untragic end of *Faust*, they ascribe this displeasing event to Goethe's 'conciliating' idiosyncrasies instead of looking again to see if there can be any other reason, implicit *in the play*, for the exclusion of tragedy.

But we, if we desire to show a greater caution, must remember that there are two distinct themes to be watched: firstly we have to recognize the fact that tragedy is something alien to humanity as a species since, as Goethe says, tragedy is 'irreconcilable' and nothing irreconcilable has happened to the human race so far (though the atomic bomb wavers unpleasantly near that category). Macbeth and Hamlet are lost souls, but the race survives . . . Or—to take an example from the work under survey—when Euphorion-Byron crashes to his death, only Byron can be lamented, briefly, in a spirit of tragedy, while Euphorion's death must be celebrated rather than mourned since poetry, when it dies, dies into a fresh life. Secondly, we have to realize that this is *not* the reason for the corresponding 'happy ending' of Faust the man. *He* escapes the doom of tragedy because his character is what it is and because the Lord's attitude towards redemption is the attitude proclaimed in the *Prologue in Heaven*. The premises from which this untragic conclusion derives are contained in the play—not in a remark torn out of a private letter. Goethe's personal aversion for irreconcilable situations is, as it must be in a work of this nature, certainly bound up with the working-out of his *Faust*, but what we have to decide is whether Faust's salvation is a logical conclusion to the play or whether it has been imposed, in the teeth of inspiration, by a squeamish and horrified author.

But it is high time we returned to the text. We may still feel slightly uncomfortable about the elves' last song, with that somewhat Nietzschean chord in its conclusion:

> Säume nicht, dich zu erdreisten,
> Wenn die Menge zaudern schweift;
> Alles kann der Edle leisten,
> Der versteht und rasch ergreift.
>
> (Do not hesitate to *dare* when the dilatory multitude strays away. Everything can be accomplished by the noble one who understands and is swift to seize).

For this savours of the advice which Mephisto, throughout the *First Part*, was so zealous in offering. But this fairy exhortation is addressed first of all, I believe, to the symbolic Faust who by his boldness and supermanliness is to prepare a stage for Helen. And we must grant, too, that 'swiftness to seize' is not wholly insidious advice when it is offered to an erstwhile academic about to enter the world of kings and land drainage.

Ariel's song to the rising sun is, on the contrary, somewhat reminiscent of the Archangels' paeans in the *Prologue in Heaven*—

until we come to the words, 'Phöbus' Räder rollen prasselnd' (Phoebus' wheels revolve and thunder); Phoebus, like Ariel himself, is a figure not to be seen among the Heavenly Hosts. Indeed, I feel that, for all our initial discomfort, we should be grateful to Ariel and his sprites: their graceful little scene has forced us to realize the need for re-orientation as we approach the *Second Part*.

Faust now awakes, refreshed, to break into a superb eulogy of the 'new day'. Compare it with the similarly revealing soliloquy at the outset of the *First Part*, and a world of difference emerges: here there are none of those high-pitched cries of anguish, no querulous complainings, no merely personal dissatisfaction, for this is the outburst of a thoughtful man who is also energetic and passably happy. It is significant that the sun receives those lyrical attentions which the earlier Faust reserved for his 'melancholy friend' the moon. And that the comparison of human life to the rainbow is, oddly enough, not a lament over the futility and impermanence of man's efforts:

> *Der* spiegelt ab das menschliche Bestreben.
> Ihm sinne nach, und du begreifst genauer:
> Am farbigen Abglanz haben wir das Leben.
>
> (It mirrors human endeavour. Consider it, and you'll grasp it more exactly: life we see in the colourful, reflected glory).

The implication is, rather, that intransitory though life may seem, it is nonetheless inspired by an eternal truth just as the rainbow is inspired by the sun shining on the waterfall. But the idea remains fragmentary; there is no moral revolution manifest here, no new and noble philosophy propounded, only a visible tendency in our hero to think along healthier lines. The Faust of the *First Part* never encouraged himself, in his soliloquies, to comprehend 'more exactly' (*genauer*).

THE EMPEROR'S PALACE.

This scene is a kind of inverted *Prologue in Heaven*, where the empty-headed Emperor replaces the Lord, the Chancellor and Treasurer and other Court officials correspond to the Archangels, wailing now instead of hymning, and Mephisto (who is deputising for the Court Fool) still bearing the outsider's part, though on this occasion praising the *status quo* instead of condemning it:

> Was könnte da zum Unheil sich vereinen,
> Zur Finsterniss, wo solche Sterne scheinen?
> (What could here unite for evil, in the cause of darkness, where such stars are shining?)

This story of a bankrupt German Empire under a ruler 'who has every quality necessary to lose his country'[4] has its amusing moments

[4]Goethe to Eckermann.

but is hardly memorable. More than anything it demonstrates Goethe's sheer poetic facility: he can write good sound verse, with a leavening of epigram and a scattering of curt and illuminating images, on any subject it would seem, however unpromising; sometimes we wonder if he has not deliberately chosen a dull and apparently intractable situation for the sole purpose of showing us just what he can put into it. The obvious objection to the unnecessary length of this scene of privy council is quite just—and yet, even while admitting this, we are forced to acknowledge that the evocation of so vivid a picture of an incompetently governed state ('Verpfändet ist der Pfühl im Bette'—'pawned is the pillow on the bed') in so *short* a space is a remarkable achievement, not easily paralleled outside the work of Shakespeare. A *tour de force*, certainly, but we expect more than that from the author of the *First Part*.

The scene's satire is of the mildly amusing, rather than the pointed kind: for instance, the Archbishop's dictum, 'Natur ist Sünde, Geist ist Teufel' (Nature is sin, spirit the devil) and Mephisto's plan to restore the country's solvency by issuing masses of paper money on the strength of all the treasure which, by the law of averages, must lie buried somewhere in the empire and thus belongs rightfully to the Emperor.

The long dawdling Masquerade which follows is another exercise in the *Walpurgis Night* genre, but it is much more flamboyant, accomplished, more virtuosic—and more tedious. The actors range from Florentine Flower Girls to the Grecian Fates and Furies, and the verse is always lively and often lovely; but how should we feel if, in place of Autolycus' 'When daffodils begin to peer', Shakespeare had thrown in *Lucrece, Venus and Adonis* and all of the sonnets? Various keys to the allegorical meaning of the Masquerade have been offered, none of them very inviting. Obviously a genuine masquerade (and this is one) cannot be allegorical in any very interesting way for, since the constantly changing figures stay only to recite their lyric pieces, no consistent meaning can possibly be developed. The 'symbolism' is solely of the simple *tableau vivant* variety, and the most amusing 'group' is the one that says the least:

> (*stage directions*) THE HERALD
>
> announces diverse poets, Nature Poets, Court and Chivalric Minstrels, Poets of Sentiment and also of Enthusiasm . . . The Nocturnal and Grave-yard Poets ask to be excused since at this very moment they are engaged in a most interesting conversation with a freshly-arisen vampire, out of which a new *genre* of poetry may well develop . . .

The most one can safely say of the Masquerade's significance in the play's evolution is that, by its introduction of characters from Greek myth, it prepares the reader for the future *Helena* section, and, by its insistence on figures from international art and poetry

(the Pulcinelli from Roman carnival, the Parasites from Greek and Roman comedy, and Zoïlo-Thersites, the compound critic of Homer and the Homeric heroes), it suggests, however faintly, that the evolution of art is somehow to be the chief index to the evolution of the human spirit. It ends, at last, with a magic conflagration for which Mephisto is presumably responsible.

The leisurely procedure of this and the following scene (where the paper money is presented to the vacillating Emperor as an accomplished fact) brings home to us how extensive a re-adjustment we have to make in the quality of our attention. The careful word-by-word evaluation of the *First Part*, and the frequent 'reference-back' to the *Prologue in Heaven*, would be altogether out of place here, and a peculiarly futile case of breaking a butterfly on a wheel: the Masquerade is a reservoir of lyric verse, to be dipped into at leisure, not a sequence of controlled dramatic poetry to be scrutinized throughout. One is prompted to reflect that the *Second Part* is a work which could by no stretch of the imagination be written these days—but it is not a work which cannot be read these days. The quality of the verse ensures this: there is that saving, just-submerged element of epigram which pulls the remotest of the lyrical songs into the semblance of a cogent whole. Examples throng to mind; listening to the song of the Gardeners, a pleasant piece of triviality 'accompanied by theorbos', we hear that characteristic note in

> Über Rosen lässt sich dichten,
> In die Äpfel muss man beissen
>
> (Let them poetise on roses,
> Apples must be bitten into).

In evaluating the verse the critic must not overlook its idiomatic nature—the use of *spoken* phrases and (with so delicate a touch) of proverbial allusions, expressed in a 'conversation above grossness and below refinement, where propriety resides' and set in constantly varied metrical forms, give these long set-pieces of Goethe's a kind of life of their own—but nothing can give them a common life *within* the Faust drama. All the special pleading in the world cannot hide the fact—just now beginning to make itself felt—that, for our generation, the *First Part* is immeasurably more satisfying than the *Second*. But one still hesitates to say that the former is ***absolutely*** superior to the latter.

DARK GALLERY.

For the first time since the *Second Part* began we find Faust and Mephisto alone together—that situation which hitherto has always provided us with something in the way of a landmark along the road. But Mephisto, it transpires, no longer sustains the rôle of zealous Evil Genius; indeed, Faust accuses his companion of deliberately avoiding him. And, further, it seems that the tables have been turned, and Faust is now doing his best to seduce

Mephisto from his sober and traditional anti-Christianity, for he has promised to let the Emperor see the shades of Helen and Paris, a project which utterly horrifies Mephisto. It involves, he complains, a visit to 'ein fremdestes Bereich', a sphere most strange, that is, to Mephisto himself. It is curious, too, to find the impatient Faust referring to his equivocating friend as 'der Vater aller Hindernisse'—'the father of all hindrances'. But, as we remember, however great his power over Faust may seem, Mephisto is under contract to accede to his every request, even those inimical to his dark purpose (I need not touch again on the fairly obvious moral implications of this), and hence he has to instruct Faust in the one way to evoke the shades—by journeying to 'the Mothers':

> Kein Weg! Ins Unbetretene,
> Nicht zu Betretende; ein Weg ans Unerbetene,
> Nicht zu Erbittende. Bist du bereit?—
> Nicht Schlösser sind, nicht Riegel wegzuschieben,
> Von Einsamkeiten wirst umhergetrieben.
> Hast du Begriff von Od' und Einsamkeit?
>
> (No way! Into the untrodden, never to be trodden; a way to the unmoved, never to be moved. Are you ready? There are no keys, no bolts to be pushed aside; you will be impelled through solitudes. Can you conceive of desert and solitude?)

But—and this is not unimportant—we do not get the impression that Mephisto's reluctance has, on this occasion, any professional ulterior motive; the very idea of descending into the Greek underworld really does affect him most unpleasantly:

> Das Heidenvolk geht mich nichts an,
> Es haust in seiner eignen Hölle
>
> (The heathen folk are no concern of mine, they inhabit their own hell).

And when Faust, inflexible, disappears under the ground, Mephisto muses to himself 'Neugierig bin ich, ob er wieder kommt' (I am curious to see whether he'll come back). The Devil seems to have lost heart as well as face, and we wonder whether some realization of the truth behind the Lord's dogmatic optimism has dawned upon him, or some recognition of the futility of his struggle against *being* has been borne in upon him during his actual participation in human life (which, if somewhat equivocal up to date, has at least been varied and impressively energetic). Yet, as we approach that section of the work which has so much more to do with the growth of the human spirit in the abstract than with the particular spirit of Faust, it is only fitting that Mephisto should exchange his rôle of active devil and devil's advocate for that of the spectator or, at most (as when masquerading as Phorkyas in the *Helena*), the neutral position of Master of Ceremonies in a pedagogic excursion into the past.

We ought not to let the nature and significance of 'the Mothers' puzzle us overmuch. When the earnest Eckermann questioned Goethe about them, the poet merely repeated Faust's awe-struck words—'The Mothers! Mothers! It sounds so strange!'—and refused to be drawn into any explanation beyond mentioning a reference which he had found in Plutarch to 'the Mothers' as antique deities of Greece. What is fairly obvious is that they are intended to represent the ultimate creative principles who reign over a somewhat platonic 'boundless realm of Form' ('der Gebilde losgebundne Reiche'), the beginning and the end of all spiritual creatures; so much is left to the reader's conjecture that the best answer to Nevinson's query, 'Were the Mothers the original creative forces of Nature, or the source of all form and beauty?' would seem to be 'Both'—error on this point will pass unnoticed.

The arbitrary introduction of 'the Mothers' and the cloudy mumbojumbo that surrounds them is, I am afraid, part of that apparently deliberate mystification of the reader which pervades so much of the *Second Part*: it is a far cry from the *Walpurgis Night* of the earlier play which, in spite of its full-blown grotesquery and its rather dubious strain of literary satire, did fit into the Christian pattern affirmed in the *Prologue in Heaven* and was intended to confuse and bewilder Faust, not the reader. For the defence, it can be maintained that these mysterious personages are eminently suitable as a form of introduction to both Helen of Troy and the allegorical events of a historical-cultural nature which are soon to take place: the Greek Hades being, after all, a more venerable institution than the Christian Inferno. But, even so, the reader is bound to feel aggrieved that Goethe, whose intentions were already sufficiently complicated, should have puzzled us further than was strictly necessary by wilfully sending Faust, and the reader, to contend with divinities who are so remarkably obscure.

BARONIAL HALL.

The Imperial Court is assembled to witness the evocation of Helen and Paris, and Mephisto, installed in the prompter's box, reminds us for a moment of his mordant witticisms of the past:

> Von hier aus hoff' ich allgemeine Gunst,
> Einbläsereien sind des Teufels Redekunst
>
> (From now on I hope for universal favour: prompting is the Devil's eloquence).

But the transition from drama to fantasy, or from parable to allegory, is now almost complete, and the poet's new project is ushered in as Faust, who has been successful in his descent to the underworld, falls under Helen's spell, resents Paris's attentions, and attempts to embrace her: 'Explosion. Faust lies on the ground. The spirits melt into mist'. Stawell and Dickinson[5] make this

[5]*Goethe and Faust*, F. Melian Stawell and G. Lowes Dickinson, 1928.

comment: 'The premature attempt to seize the wraith of Helen is characteristic. The real pursuit [of the spirit of classical beauty] must be a longer business, as Goethe knew from his training in Rome'. As the reader will soon discover, this passion for Helen is by no means a repetition or variation of the Gretchen episode: the moral problem has sunk still further from sight while the cultural theme (you cannot call it a 'problem') rises into the foreground of the play. And this latter—here considered in the aspect of Beauty impingent on the human spirit—is so portentous a subject that the commentator can hardly avoid portentousness in discussing it, but nevertheless I wonder if the comment I have just quoted is not a little overstudied. A more obvious explanation of Faust's precipitate and rash act is surely that, apart from it being the kind of thing he would do, the explosion provides an exit for the earlier Faust and prepares the reader for the metamorphosed Hero who, after the further preliminaries of the *Classical Walpurgis Night*, will symbolize the Romantic Spirit in life and art.

ACT II: GOTHIC CHAMBER, FORMERLY FAUST'S.

But Goethe is still busily trying to make the most of both themes and, as the second act opens, he takes us back to Faust's old room where the erstwhile professor lies unconscious after the unfortunate contretemps with the phantom Helen. We notice, too, that Faust's new passion is still talked of as if it were a 'merely' personal emotion like his love for Gretchen—Mephisto's first words are

> Hier lieg', Unseliger! verführt
> Zu schwer gelöstem Liebesbande!
> Wen Helena paralysirt,
> Der kommt so leicht nicht zu Verstande.
>
> (Lie here, unfortunate, tricked into love's bonds, hard to loosen! He, whom Helen paralyses, does not easily regain his senses).

The subsequent encounter between Mephisto and Baccalaureus (whom we met in the *First Part* as the naïve Freshman to whom Mephisto gave such consummately bad advice) is hardly edifying. Far from showing gratification at the successful outcome of his insidious wiles, Mephisto's attitude towards his late victim is a curious combination of self-disparagement and fatherly tolerance, and to Baccalaureus' disappearing back he merely remarks

> Wer kann was Dummes, wer was Kluges denken,
> Das nicht die Vorwelt schon gedacht?
>
> (Who can think of anything stupid, anything wise, that the Past hasn't already thought?)

—a piece of redundant moralising which, we feel, is unredeemed by any devilish ulterior motive (only the audience hears it, anyway). Baccaleureus, the great I Am, offers us nothing new, for

he is only a grossly vulgarized caricature of the early Faust; indeed, by reminding us that Faust, at his most unreasonable, was essentially decent and latently intelligent, Baccalaureus does the play something of an injury since it is hardly tactful of Goethe to remind us of the original Faust at this point. Quite apart from this, we feel that—if we must meet Baccalaureus at all—we should prefer to see him dealt with in a more energetic fashion, in fact we should love to see him utterly and absolutely demolished; but no, he represents, Goethe says,[6] the presumption of youth, and so I suppose the poet feels unwilling to treat him too harshly since youths will be youths and often make sensible adults later on. Mephisto *is* speaking 'out of character' now—his tolerant reference to Baccalaureus,

> Doch sind wir auch mit diesem nicht gefährdet,
> In wenig Jahren wird es anders sein:
> Wenn sich der Most auch ganz absurd geberdet,
> Es gibt zuletzt doch 'nen Wein
>
> (Even so, we are in no danger from him, things will be different in a few years: although the must conducts itself quite absurdly, yet there'll still be some wine in the end).

is simply a less dignified variant of the Lord's metaphor of the gardener and the young tree. This is another manifestation of the gradual 'weakening' of Mephisto's rôle that I have already mentioned. The same can be said of Mephisto's appeals to the pit (two in this short scene, and more to follow): a weakening not only of Mephisto's significance, but also of the dramatic quality of the play . . . of what dramatic qualities are left, I ought to say.

LABORATORY, IN THE MEDIAEVAL MANNER.

Mephisto makes his way to the adjacent laboratory where we find Wagner (formerly Faust's famulus) attempting the artificial production of life; whereupon, with (or without—the point is obscure and of no apparent importance) Mephisto's help, a little disembodied spirit is created within a glass phial. This lively mannikin, Homunculus by name, is one of the most garish of the many red herrings that dart through the pages of the *Second Part*; his usefulness is far from evident, his 'meaning' obscure in the extreme. In this latter particular the reader has an embarrassingly wide choice: interpretations offered by the commentators, English and German, vary from the permissible but unhelpful ('a symbol of the *vis essentialis*') to the inspired but irregular ('the humanist movement and the revival of interest in classical literature'). Goethe himself aided and abetted by talking of the 'profound myth-historical elements in Homunculus' nature'. Certainly the only

[6] Eckermann's *Conversations*.

tangible result of his introduction is that Mephisto submits to further humiliations and his status falls still lower; Homunculus is the leading spirit in the journey to the Classical Walpurgis Night, for it is he who decides that Faust must be transported to Greece before he wakes, he who can see what is going on in Faust's mind (the lovely Leda dream), hidden though it is from Mephisto, to whom he says

> Du aus Norden,
> Im Nebelalter jung geworden,
> Im Wust von Ritterthum und Pfäfferei,
> Wo wäre da dein Auge frei!
> Im Düstern bist du nur zu Hause
>
> (You, from the North, grew up in the misty ages, in the wastes of chivalry and priesthood—how could your eye be free there! Only in the gloom do you feel at home).

Thus the transition from the significant and powerful agent of the *First Part* to the disorganized 'outsider' of the *Second* is well under way.

We are rather disconcerted (if we are still capable of that condition) by the extremely mild and tolerant treatment handed out to Wagner, who was the 'comic relief' of the *First Part* but is now credited with the creation of this very portentous little being, Homunculus. Stawell and Dickinson sum up the scene in the words, 'Wagner has not lived for nothing'. Even pedants have their uses: that, indeed, would seem to be the import of this gentle little interlude; but we find that Goethe's carefulness in seeing that everyone gets his due (sometimes it amounts to pure finickiness) can be very confusing to the reader. Here, and elsewhere, the *Second Part* threatens to degenerate into a kind of learned debating society where commentators are invited, *sotto voce*, to join in at will. This one scene exhibits good examples of Goethe's two worst vices: his over-exuberant creative facility, to which we owe Homunculus and his curious history, and his over-conscientiousness in passing judgment even on his own created characters; it is this latter trait which must be held responsible for the present ambiguous attitude towards Wagner. Earlier, when we laughed outright at him, Wagner was a lively figure; now, in giving him his due, Goethe has taken away all his liveliness.

There is just one other aspect of this scene that we should glance at before we pass on. And that, very significant in its bearing on the mode of operation of the *Second Part*, concerns the different *nature* of the epigrams. Now in the *First Part*, as I noted when dealing with it, the epigrams are almost invariably made 'in character': Mephisto, for instance, made devilish epigrams and if, on the surface, they seemed worthily moral then closer examination disclosed their destructive animus. But now, it would seem, the epigrams stand in their own right, they operate in a vacuum—no longer serving the play's purpose, no longer revealing

character or suddenly illuminating the clash of spiritual forces. So although the pithy reflection provoked by the battle in which Caesar defeated Pompey is attributed to Mephisto—

> Sie streiten sich, so heisst's, um Freiheitsrechte;
> Genau besehn, sind's Knechte gegen Knechte
>
> (They're fighting, so they say, for liberty;
> It's slaves fight slaves, on closer scrutiny)—

we know that it is really Goethe speaking.

This episode ends with Homunculus managing to persuade Mephisto into attending the Classical Witches' Sabbath, but only by holding out the exotic charms of Thessalian witches as bait.

D. J. ENRIGHT.

[To be concluded].

COMMENTS AND REVIEWS

A PARTIAL CONVERT?

THE YOGI AND THE COMMISSAR, by Arthur Koestler (*Cape*, 10/6).

'Thomas Mann says somewhere that to leave a trace behind him a writer must produce not only quality but bulk; the sheer bulk of the *oeuvre* helps its impact on us. This is a melancholy truth . . . ' writes Arthur Koestler in the present volume. He himself, however, does not seem to be an author whom we need to read in bulk. *The Yogi and the Commissar* adds nothing to the stature of the author of *Darkness at Noon*. It does, however, throw some light on the reasons for the weakness of the novel which lies in the author's cast of thought. The presentation of the revolutionary's plight is admirable in its 'inwardness'. On the other hand, the author's point of view seems insufficiently detached from that of the leading victim, Rubashov. It does not follow, of course, that because Koestler is imperfectly weaned from his revolutionary past he could not transcend his limitations when creating a novel. But if this particular flaw can be detected in the occasional essays of such a competent journalist, there is some inducement to return to the novel with this criticism in mind.

The various essays and articles were written over the last few years for a number of American and English periodicals and reviews. Although the difference of tone and the level of approach adopted, for example, when writing for the *New York Times Magazine* and *Horizon* is so great that at times one wonders what the articles are doing under the same covers, the book does present

a certain unity of theme. Mr. Koestler has a message, a Cassandra-like warning 'seen from the melancholy angle of a Continental (or rather of that bunch of homeless Leftists to whom I belong, and whom the Stalinites call Trotskyites, and the Trotskyites call Imperialists, and the Imperialists call bloody Reds) . . . ' The advantage of this group is that they had seen 'reality' and suffered in person from totalitarian evil. And those who have lived under a dictatorship know the vital importance of democratic institutions.

When Mr. Koestler speaks of his experiences (in the concentration camp of Le Vernet, for example), he is telling and convincing. But Mr. Koestler aims higher than mere reportage. He wishes to analyse and account for the disappointments and defeats which have marked the history of left-wing politics from Marx to the present day. His sympathies go out in particular to the intellectuals in the movement. To give one example, there were the unwanted intellectuals in the Third International. 'The few members of the Western intelligentsia who were accepted into its ranks lost first the right, and soon even the desire for "independent thought"; they became fanatic sectarians and Party-hacks, while the best among them met a tragic end'.

It is characteristic of Mr. Koestler that he is not content to write mere political history either. He feels bound to ground his arguments on a metaphysical basis. That he has remarkable qualifications for this task is evident. He moves with masterly ease among the most recent conclusions of anthropology, psychology, psycho-analysis, physics, bio-chemistry, etc. 'It is now six o'clock in the evening; I have just had a drink and I feel a strong temptation to have a couple more and then go and dine out instead of writing this essay'. But he overcomes the temptation and finishes off the final chapter of the book in which he deals with the problem of freedom and determinism in a thorough *philosophisch-historisch* way, from the mentality of the Primitive through Christianity to the seventeenth century: the effect on ethics of the change through this period: the new standpoint resulting from the discoveries in physics at the beginning of this century: the problem as seen in the biological sciences: parallel developments in Gestalt psychology: a section on Freud: the effect of all this on ethics to-day. And he concludes by stating that the future of European civilization depends on reforming man's integrity: 'neither the saint nor the revolutionary can save us; only the synthesis of the two'.

Mr. Koestler has these modern sciences so much at his fingers' ends that he introduces them as striking metaphors in contexts where we should least expect them. 'For myths grow like crystals: there is some diffuse emotion latent in the social medium which strives for expression as the molecules in a saturated solution strive to form a coherent pattern; and as soon as a suitable core is found they group themselves around it and a crystal is formed, the myth is born'. (The myth in this case is Richard Hillary). At one point Mr. Koestler seems aware of the weakness of this type of writing

('Actually I still believe that this is true, as metaphors go') but the tendency to indulge in this kind of thinking is not thereby seriously inhibited. Under the heading 'The Intelligentsia and Neurosis' he writes as follows:

> 'This sensitive membrane not only stretches between heterogeneous social classes, but between the social body as a whole and its environment. It is tempting, and perhaps not entirely futile, to follow up this metaphor for a while. It is the surface, the ectoderm, philogenetically the rind of the plasmatic bubble, which provides the tissue for the nerves, the spinal cord and the brain in the embryo. The central nervous system is derived not, as one would expect, from the inside, the sheltered parts, the core; but from the exposed surface, permanently submitted to the bombardment of external stimuli, to irritation and excitement, some lust and much pain. Under the influence of this permanent buzzing shower-bath of stimuli the surface-tissue gradually loses its obtuseness and undergoes that strange transformation, that "burning through" process which finally gives rise to the elusive, first faint glow of consciousness. The grey matter of the brain-rind was originally skin-tissue, exposed and brow-beaten, transformed by a unique organic metamorphosis. Even Freud, that giant of profanity, became almost lyrical where (in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*) he dealt with this aspect of the biology of the mind.
>
> 'However, man developed a skull, in which his precious grey matter is safely packed like caviare in a box. No such casing is provided by society for its nervous tissues. They are rather treated like corns on the toes, a nuisance permanently trampled on and permanently hitting back with mean little stabs'.

The two essays, the first and the last, which give the title to the whole collection, are a riot of intellectual speculation such as few if any of the writers of *Horizon* (where the first essay appeared) could hope to rival. Mr. Koestler provides us in his lively near-English with first-hand examples of a type of thinking more at home on the Continent than in England. If we are slow to applaud the fireworks it is not for any want of admiration of their brilliancy. We don't get so much of this kind of thing in English journalism that we should so quickly show signs of satiety. But Mr. Koestler claims to be profoundly disturbed and to have a serious purpose. So that any doubts of his sincerity, any doubt, that is, that he is allowing himself to be carried away by the intoxication of his own speculations tends to awake the gravest suspicions. The insinuation of the metaphors from pyrotechnics is that Mr. Koestler is not really at grips with his theme: the conditions of spiritual rebirth in Europe.

In significant contrast to the wealth of analysis of the errors of the past is the distressing vagueness of his formulations of the goal to be reached. The various phrases ('spiritual renaissance', 'Western revolutionary humanism', 'a new fraternity in a new

spiritual climate') for this and those for the means (we must 'recover the lost half of our personalities, man's wholeness and holiness' and to do so we must learn from the East 'the art and science of contemplation') are not bathed in an invigorating context that would make them more than mere phrases and gestures in the 'right' direction.

To say this is not to complain that Mr. Koestler does not produce a blue-print for the future conduct of the world. But when he is discussing topics where a firm grasp of the human values he wishes to preserve and restore is needed, his language does not inspire confidence. In referring to current literature, for example, he seems to have taken on trust the merely fashionable valuations. He seems to consider *The Waves* a masterpiece of the same order as *Tristram Shandy* and places Hemingway as a craftsman on a par with D. H. Lawrence. His opinion of book-reviewers is not what one would expect of an author of his pretensions. Referring to the reviewers in the *Herald*, the *Observer* and the *Listener*, he says, 'Their judgment is not infallible but generally sound and independent; they are to the point, neither facetious nor dull; they rarely miss an important book'. And he seems to take the 'allusiveness' of the highbrow reviewers in the *New Statesman* . . . for a sign of culture!

Even when he goes against the current fashions as, for example, in attacking the cult of Aragon, some of his arguments are surprisingly weak. The point to be made against Aragon's claims for his new rhymes is not that they are 'bad' but that they are proposed as ends in themselves. Mr. Koestler, however, attacks them as follows: 'Now poets ever since Donne and Goethe have used imperfect rhymes if they couldn't help it—but they never tried to convert a shortcoming into a philosophy . . . '. And even where Mr. Koestler is more on his own ground in discussing the problems of novel writing to-day, the presence of the essential human values is not firmly felt. The greatness of a novelist, he says, is in direct proportion to the width and depth of his vision. An admirable pronouncement and one that we should expect to include a great deal more than the following: 'The perfect novel, then, indeed presupposes a totally open window, and that the author should have an all-embracing knowledge of the essential currents and facts (including statistics), of the ideas and theories (including the natural sciences) of his time'.

The conclusion emerging from inspection of these collected articles is that Mr. Koestler remains essentially a thinker of the Marxist type and that his thought for all its greater suppleness is open to the objections raised against almost all Marxist excursions into the field of human values. Although Mr. Koestler corrects and refines on his predecessors he shares two at least of their main tendencies: he stresses the element of necessity in history and he stresses the importance of the 'new' sciences in his mental picture of the modern world, both to the detriment of a humanist approach. Considerations of space make it impossible to do justice to the

complexity of Mr. Koestler's position. The reader is asked, however, to judge whether the following passages are marked by the absence of considerations that should have been there as a controlling and modifying force.

'The swinging of this pendulum from rationalistic to romantic periods and back is not contradictory to the conception of a basic dialectic movement of History. It is like the tidal waves on a river which yet flows into the sea. One of the fatal lacunae in the Marxist interpretation of history is that it was only concerned with the course of the river, not with the waves. The mass-psychological aspect of Nazism is not describable in Marxist terms, in terms of the river's course; we need the tidal waves to account for it. On the other hand our pendulum alone is no guide to history. We must know about the river before we talk of the waves'.

'The most evident hypothesis at our present state of knowledge is that the movements of history are determined by laws of a statistical nature, analogous to the physical laws of probability. A great mass of people exposed for a long time to certain forms of pressure—climatic, economic, etc.—will sooner or later react in certain roughly predictable ways. The emphasis is on the "sooner or later" and on "roughly"; they provide the margin within which the Subjective Factors of chance and leadership can exert their influence. However, if we survey history in big time units—centuries instead of decades—the importance of the Subjective Factor becomes negligible and statistical probabilities become certainties'.

(On the other hand, while he can write 'A planned state-controlled economy is the inevitable next step of historical evolution', in the following paragraph he says, 'We thus come to the conclusion that the political, cultural, ethical conditions of a country are not, as a degenerated socialist doctrine wants us to believe, mere "superstructures" automatically determined by the economic foundation, but are factors of primary importance which decide to what use the economic machinery is put').

'The shake-up of the First World War seemed to create a new opportunity for a general debunking and rebuilding. The whole body of ideas had undergone a radical transformation: Relativity and Quantum mechanics, Hormonology and Psychoanalysis, Leninism and Behaviourism, Aviation and Wireless, Expressionism and Surrealism—a completely new universe had taken shape in the library; and the dazzling light it radiated drove the intelligentsia half crazy by its contrast to the anachronistic, dusty-musty traditions still governing everyday conduct and beliefs'.

The test case *par excellence* for Mr. Koestler is his treatment of the Soviet Union. For he accuses Soviet Russia of 'corrupting, warping and finally destroying the international revolutionary

movement and sacrificing the best elements of the European working class'.

'Nothing', says Mr. Koestler, 'makes one more impatient than to see another person stubbornly cling to the errors of one's own past . . . In some this exasperation turns to hatred—the Trotskyite attitude of the betrayed lover who proclaims to all and sundry that his sweetheart is a whore and yet foams with rage at each new proof of it. The loss of an illusion has the same unbalancing effect as a libidinous disturbance'. It might be pertinent in another context to enquire how far Mr. Koestler is open to the above criticism. But for the purposes of this review two other points are of primary importance. Firstly, the author seems to have been uncritical in his acceptance of the early stages of the Revolution. From one who claims to uphold humane values a note of reserve should have tempered the following:

> During the first few years Soviet myth and Russian reality were fairly congruent. It was the heroic age in which legends are generated. Behind the smoke there was real fire.
>
> 'And what a fire! The People had seized the power and had maintained itself in power on one sixth of the earth. Private ownership, the profit motive, sexual taboos, social conventions were abolished practically in one stroke. There were no more rich and poor, masters and servants, officers and men. The husband had no longer authority over his wife, the parent over his child, the teacher over his pupil. The history of *Homo Sapiens* seemed to start from scratch. There was a thunder behind the words of those unheard-of decrees like the voice from Sinai which gave the Ten Commandments. Those who listened felt as if some rigid crust inside them, the parched crust of scepticism, frustration, resigned common sense had suddenly burst open'.

Secondly, in his indictment of present-day Russia, although he is acute, and his conclusions would probably command wide assent, his manner of presenting his case is that of a special pleader. He allows himself to exaggerate, to ignore facts, to make too sweeping generalizations. He does not, however, ruin his case against what one feels are his opponents, the upholders of the régime. The point is that this approach alienates the sympathies of those who never shared his illusions but do appreciate the charge that the values on which civilization rests are to say the least in jeopardy in Russia. Possibly nobody has the information to speak authoritatively about Russia. But this very fact should impose the need for greater restraint and wariness in passing judgment. Mr. Koestler remarks that the methods of Soviet Justice have lost the faculty of making even the truth appear credible. His own case against Russia is presented in such a way that it is hard to believe that he is holding firmly before him that sense of relative values without which historical judgments come to have the air of merely partisan verdicts.

The points thus laboriously presented seem to me to justify the conclusion that Mr. Koestler is still in a transitional stage and one which detracts from his value as a thinker and a novelist. These arguments and the evidence chosen to support them, however, give a rather one-sided picture of Mr. Koestler's talents. He remains one of the few writers to be taken seriously to-day. And with all its faults *The Yogi and the Commissar* is not to be classed with *Animal Farm*.

H. A. Mason.

ARAGON: CAPITULATION OR RESISTANCE?

LES YEUX D'ELSA, par Aragon ; Editions Pierre Seghers, 66 *frs.*

SERVITUDE ET GRANDEURS DES FRANCAIS: Scènes des années terribles, par Aragon, La Bibliothèque Française, 90 *frs.*

ARAGON, par Claude Roy; Poètes d'aujourd'hui 2; *Ed. Pierre Seghers,* 65 *frs.*

I think Aragon's verse, so far as substance is concerned, could be dismissed pretty summarily in these pages; English fashions in French verse have in any case moved on since its discovery was proclaimed a couple of years ago. Symptomatically, however, for the contemporary mind, Aragon has considerable interest, and the recently published short stories reveal, without much dissection, motives and responses that are effectually disguised (though not belied) by the verse.

The staple of his 'war-verse' (an infusion of love-and-patriotism) is a concatenation of verbal and emotional cliché, by facility of rhyme and elimination of punctuation:

> Ne parlez pas d'amour J'écoute mon coeur battre
> Il couvre les refrains sans fil qui l'ont grisé
> Ne parlez plus d'amour Que fait-elle là-bas
> Trop proche et trop lointaine ô temps martyrisé
> Ne parlez plus d'amour Le feu chante dans l'âtre
> Et les flammes y font un parfum de baisers.

That in fact is offered as a conscious exploitation of radio cliché, but acceptance is more apparent than satire, and in quality it is quite representative. In his more literary vein there is a somewhat derivative *poésie des départs*:

> Comme des sourd-muets parlant dans une gare
> Leur langage tragique au coeur noir du vacarme
> Les amants séparés font des gestes hagards
> Dans le silence blanc de l'hiver et des armes

which inserts *tragique* (a word as recurrently useful as *ironique* on which so much modern poetry in all languages depends) a little

too easily; the vocabulary tends to come out of stock just as much in his rapturous declarations:

> Qu'importe que je meure avant que se dessine
> Le visage sacré s'il doit renaître un jour
> Dansons ô mon enfant dansons la capucine
> Ma patrie est la faim la misère et l'amour

for when *renaître* is not tapping religious reservoirs so directly as here and a number of other places, in conjunction with the future tense it can still supply some considerable inspiration to the willing reader. Strangely enough, *peut-être*, used in this connection and in this manner, can sustain much enthusiastic confidence. For time past the consecration *Je n'oublierai jamais* is in constant employment:

> Je n'oublierai jamais l'illusion tragique;

or better,

> On nous a dit ce soir que Paris s'est rendu
> Je n'oublierai jamais les lilas ni les roses

where the attribution of meaning to an image and a poem by manipulation of the reader's responsiveness is seen at its most mechanical. His intimate vocabulary is put to good use, too—*pour nous seuls, naguère, O mon amour o ma blessure*, and so on—France and Elsa, public and private, being indistinguishable in his verse, for so much depends on that pleasant feeling of confusion (*saouler*, always metaphorically, of course).

To anyone to whom these facts are fairly apparent it must seem absurd to talk, as Aragon's sponsors, Mr. Connolly in particular, do, of his 'deliberate technical revival of medieval French themes and metres' mentioning Charles d'Orléans and Villon; or to say that the poems in *Les Yeux d'Elsa* 'suggest Pound's Cantos; they differ from *Le Crève-Coeur* as Yeats's Byzantium poems differed from his *Easter 1916*'. The essential difference between these medieval and modern poets on the one part and Aragon on the other is accidentally suggested in another remark of Mr. Connolly's: 'Nowhere else has the situation called forth the man, or the intellectual poet (and the poet who is not an intellectual is to-day at a technical disadvantage) been able to liberate in himself the music for which so many are waiting'. That seemingly unconscious change of 'intellectual poet' into 'an intellectual' involves a distinction of great importance. Charles d'Orléans, Villon, Pound and Yeats are intellectual poets, and their advantage is that of disturbingly urgent apprehensions; but the nature and effects of Aragon's verse defeat such a description. 'Traduire dans le langage de l'actualité' is his claim—his idiom is so much the stale but still emotionalized commerce of the cheap novel, the cinema, and the copy-writer, that one can only think of the *actualités* of the newspapers. An intellectual, on the other hand, external evidence,

such as the *Préface* to *Les Yeux d'Elsa* and other critical writings, shows him to be. Moreover, intellectually he is aware of what he is doing[1] (which gives him his diagnostic importance), if only to be defiantly complacent in it:

> Je dis avec les mots des choses machinales . . .
> Mots démonétisés qu'on lit dans le journal
> Et je parle avec eux le langage des gens.

Not unnaturally, awareness of that sort, the eye constantly on the audience and the declaration, rather than on its proper emotional object, very often turns to uneasiness, an insecurity that is not far from actual insincerity:

> Ah si l'écho des chars dans mes vers vous dérange
> S'il grince dans mes cieux d'étranges cris d'essieu
> C'est qu'à l'orgue l'orage a détruit la voix d'ange
> Et que je me souviens de Dunkerque Messieurs
> C'est de très mauvais goût j'en conviens Mais qu'y faire
> Nous sommes quelques-uns de ce mauvais goût-là
> Qui gardons un reflet des flammes de l'enfer
> Que le faro du Nord à tout jamais saoula.

One of the interesting things is that the particulars of this defensive outburst are in fact totally absent from the bulk of his work, than which nothing could provide more effective insulation, for poet and reader, against the impact of fresh experience or thought. A manifestation of similar significance, with analogous disjunction between the protestations and the facts, is, I think, to be found in the unprofitable phrase-making ('L'art des vers est l'alchimie qui transforme en beautés les faiblesses'), imitative theorizing ('Pour moi, je n'écris jamais un poème qui ne soit la suite de réflexions portant sur chaque point de ce poème, et qui ne tienne compte de tous les poèmes que j'ai précédemment écrits, ni de tous les poèmes que j'ai précédemment lus'), and rather hollow rhetoric ('Je chante parce que l'orage n'est pas assez fort pour couvrir mon chant, et que quoi que demain l'on fasse, on pourra m'ôter cette vie, mais on n'éteindra pas mon chant)' of the *Préface* to *Les Yeux d'Elsa*. All these are demonstrations, it seems to me, of a basic lack of assurance, consequent upon a corruptingly conscious exploitation of shoddy material, quite compatible with constant success in this fraudulent dealing.[2] That he betrays himself in every line indicates

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[1] So is his hagiographer (at first): 'Les sentiments de l'amour ou de la mélancolie, de l'espérance ou de la douleur, nous trouvent toujours *à priori* consentants, abandonnés, dociles et donnent au poète des facilités aussi grandes que dangereuses'.

[2] 'He knows he is selling a commodity, and he knows its exact price'. Jean Malaquais on *Louis Aragon, or the Professional Patriot*, in the American monthly, *Politics*, August, 1945. See also the November number.

the limitations of Aragon's kind of awareness. Indulgence of the easier responses has incapacitated him for anything more worthy of discriminating attention. I think it is also fair to say that his earlier surrealist verse is formed by much the same attitude.

The kinds of satisfaction that are provided, given those appropriate motives in poet and audience, are accurately enough suggested in Mr. Connolly's words: 'For Aragon is the first poet of the United Nations to make music out of the war, to wring our hearts with the tragedy of this "great corrector of enormous times" and then to voice the meaning of defeat, till at last despair turns to desperation, and the certainty that the world will only be saved by desperate men. For once the key fits the lock, the newly acquired and tragic patriotism of this internationally-minded left-wing intellectual enables him to release by his craft the emotion of millions: the cry from his heart ends that isolation which for many writers is worse than heart-break'. Aragon's appeal to the *Horizon* and *New Statesman* public doesn't require more explanation.

When one takes up his short stories, however, the verse begins to seem a comparatively innocent indulgence. Intellectual allegiances and appearances even are abandoned for interests destructive of any artistic integrity—deliberate and offensive incitement of the reader. In comparison with Aragon's, the output of the Soviet Union's Ehrenbergs, Tolstoys, Wassiliewskas, and Sholokhovs is clumsy, probably because they themselves are genuinely absorbed in Marshal Stalin's exhortation 'You cannot defeat an enemy without having learnt to hate him from the bottom of your heart.'[3] Aragon, it seems to me, is exploiting the vicarious excitements demanded by an almost wholly non-participant and after-the-event public, not merely in such things as the clandestinity of 'la Résistance', but, more viciously, in sordid partisan brutality. In one of these stories the question is put 'Combien avez-vous fait mourir d'êtres humains selon votre droit allemand?' but in the course of the volume the Gestapo is surely far surpassed by the Maquis in the number of murders committed. This interest is taken beyond mere endorsement of the latter—there are even excited reports of quite meaningless and unexplained killings and mutilation: 'Mais le garagiste à l'entrée du faubourg, a côté vous savez de l'épicerie bleue, eh bien, comme il fermait ses portes vers le soir, un jeune homme s'est avancé qui a tiré avec une arme noire, et la balle est entrée par un oeil, on ne sait pas encore s'il va survivre, il sera aveugle en tout cas, et fou sûrement'. It is the complicity in this cult of violence that one notices; reaching almost hysterical proportions, one might say, if the manipulation of the atrocities wasn't equally noticeable:

> 'Les filles violées, les yeux d'un blessé arrachés, qui pendaient, là, là, sur la joue'.

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[3]Epigraph to *Hate*, by Mikhail Sholokhov; Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow, 1942.

'Il y a d'abord le lamento sourd des prisons d'où s'élèvent les plaintes déchirées d'instruments inconnus qu'on appelait des hommes . . . Il y a le bruit des os broyés, le grésillement noir des chairs, le concert des tortures, les cris de la douleur morale si différents de ceux de la douleur physique, la basse rythmée des coups, le chant du sang clair qui jaillit, les larmes, les larmes, les larmes . . . '.

Le Droit Romain n'est plus (having been replaced by 'droit allemand') is the title of the story from which the last quotation comes, but it is characteristic that the author shows no actual concern for 'Le Droit Romain': it simply provides a certain intellectual and emotional prestige, which he proceeds to employ (pervert, more precisely) in support of a (nowadays only too familiar) sustained moral proscription that is just as irrational and inhuman as any racialist theory. A morality (anti-fascism, anti-semitism, or whatever you will) which applies in condemnation to only one group of persons, and that has no consideration of the quality of particular acts in themselves, is sure to be pernicious, and subversive of artistic honesty and responsibility, let alone civilization. I think Aragon invites this perhaps ponderous judgment because he is so far from being unique (Gide's compliment) that he has chosen to identify himself with some very ugly trends of human conduct, and to stand as one of their literary exponents.

It will probably be best to conclude by pointing to the significant features of two of these short stories, offending especially against D. H. Lawrence's canon: 'When the novelist puts his thumb into the scale, to pull down the balance to his own predilection, that is immorality'. *Le Collaborateur* describes a middle-aged Frenchman (whose son has been killed in the retreat of 1940), who, during the occupation, continues to justify a pacific, stolid outlook, and absence of rancour, by the repeated phrase 'Il faut de la logique'. Aragon's technique in this and other stories is a too conspicuous avoidance of comment, and a building-up of the stolidity into stupidity, an intensification of the reader's exasperation to the point at which violence is *accepted*, as relief. The rest of the narrative consists of touching pen-pictures of 'le petit ange', the orphaned grand-child, and the climax and conclusion is simply this:

'Pas assez vite. Jacquot était sorti et ramassait sa balle dans la rue, en pleine chaussée.

'Assez vite pourtant pour voir, au coin de la place ronde, le soldat allemand, énorme, athlétique, qui visait soigneusement l'enfant et, d'un coup de feu, correctement, fit mouche'.

We are, I suppose, to draw our own conclusions about *la logique*.

The other story, *Les Jeunes Gens*, doesn't commit the same kind of violence on the reader's feelings, but is perhaps more interesting for its revelation of certain values and assumptions. Of the three young men, the main characters, one ('Il était reconnaissant à son père, un grand fabricant de liqueurs, de lui avoir

donné une moto, une bonne éducation, un ideal chrétien') has chivalric principles, but an initial lack of political consciousness, another is a militant worker, and the third is a 'maladjusted' rural worker, with only self-interested imagination. The narration is in terms of their 'rêves': for the young man of independent means

> 'Dans son rêve, le vieux rêve scout, on ne mentait jamais pourtant. Le difficile était d'accepter de mentir'.

Obviously there is no difficulty for Aragon: there is no comprehension that anything more than a superficial social convention is involved. This half-contemptuous tone is however modified as events bring this character together with the worker, and alter his principles conformably to necessities. 'Les scouts et les ouvriers commençaient à se ressembler; à comprendre. Bien sur, ils ne parlaient pas tout à fait le même langage. Mais pour les mots essentiels, on se comprenait . . . L'important était que maladroitement même, on se servît des mêmes mots dans le même but'.

It is interesting to note to what means this end, Resistance, ultimately converts 'le rêve scout'; but the alignment of characters and values is more significant still. It is the unattractive, the 'eugenically inferior' young man who is 'in the wrong' for the purposes of the other two 'jeunes gens', Aragon, and the reader, and when circumstances bring them all together, he is eliminated:

> 'Ils avaient sorti leurs revolvers. La voix d'Elisée s'étouffa dans sa gorge. Il ne comprenait plus. Il mit même quelques secondes à avoir peur, à commencer d'avoir mortellement peur. Il n'était pas beau à voir, vert. Ils le poussèrent encore vers le talus. Ils ne s'expliquèrent pas. C'était parfaitement inutile. Les narines d'Elisée battaient comme si elles avaient vainement cherché l'odeur des acacias. Le blond y remarqua un petit piquetis de sueur. Le rêve d'Elisée se confondit soudain avec la réalité, avec l'effroyable réalité. L'aventure.
>
> 'Ils avaient tiré en même temps, croisant leurs balles . . . '.

I don't think one is being unrealistic to refuse assent to that.

A. I. Doyle.

CALDERON AND THE MORALITY

THE ALLEGORICAL DRAMA OF CALDERÓN, by A. A. Parker (*The Dolphin Book Co.*, 16/-).

Mr. Parker's book cannot pass without a notice, however brief. It seems to be a lesson in the art of putting the apparatus of scholarship to critical use. That Mr. Parker never forgets the importance of criticism is the more noteworthy, in that he has had to forge a great deal of his apparatus.

Calderón's *autos sacramentales*, about which he writes, are significant in many ways: as the only section of the poet's work he himself was concerned to preserve, 'the fullest and most characteristic expression of his genius', according to M. Thomas (all my quotations are from Mr. Parker); as highly successful examples of religious drama, the mere possibility of which, we remember from *Polyeucte*, has been denied; as religious drama of a highly developed and highly elaborate kind. This last quality has caused them to be judged in the most various ways, though never adequately—never, at least, since the time of their appearance, when both ignorant and learned were apparently responsive to them. They were dismissed by the neo-classics as foolish indecencies, lauded by the romantics (chiefly German) as ineffable breathings; realists condemned them for bringing abstractions into the theatre, religious enthusiasts championed their dealing with 'men of flesh and blood'; some critics saw their only merit in poetic jewels they contain, as though a necklace had been broken over straw; others on the contrary descried in them a subtle architecture of 'ideas and movements'.

To escape from an arena in which blows are given and received in this random way it is necessary, says Mr. Parker, to define the *autos*; or at least, to form some idea of the end with which in view Calderón sat down to compose them. For various reasons, religious plays developed more slowly in Spain than in France or England; so that, by Calderón's time, they were as yet hardly free of the liturgy. His *autos*, in consequence, retain a liturgical flavour and, indeed, purpose: 'the sumptuousness of the production, the music, the whole note of *regocijo*' were called up by and answered to the desire for a civic, as well as an ecclesiastical, celebration of the feast of Corpus Christi. And as liturgical, they were in duty bound to instruct. Calderón never wavered from the belief that the poet must profit his hearers as well as please them. This belief, however, he held in no naïve or neo-classical way: for he addressed himself primarily, not to the understanding as a preacher might in a sermon, but to the senses—or to two of them, those of sight and hearing. Except for the music, Calderón himself supervised every detail of his productions; and from the examples Mr. Parker quotes of the settings and machinery he demanded, and of the movements and disposition of actors he

planned, he would seem to have rivalled Ben Jonson and Inigo Jones on their own ground. Spectacle of course is of less importance than poetry to readers of the *autos*; yet the former cannot be wholly forgotten, if the latter is to be fully appreciated. Finally, says Mr. Parker, Calderón's poetry in the *autos* is dramatic poetry: such, that is, as accompanies and represents or 'makes real' an action—an action of ideas, their growth, conflict and resolution, but action in the strictest sense of the word.

Calderón has left an interesting account of how he set to work to devise an *auto*. That this was to be performed on Corpus Christi day fixed his starting and ending point as the doctrine of the Eucharist or the Mass; but this restriction was more apparent than real, since it laid open to him the world of Catholic life and belief, permeated at all points by the Mass. His imagination (*fantasia*) could attach itself to the connection between this and any other doctrine, as for example that of Grace or of the Incarnation or of the Redemption; could further consider these doctrines either in their dogmatic or their ethical aspect. And once a movement to and from the Eucharist traced out along one of these or other lines, literary art (*métafora*) could come into play to transform the movement into an allegory—a dramatic allegory, since movement was of its essence. The personages composing it might bear the names of abstractions or of historical figures; bearing the latter, for example, when a doctrine was presented in the light, not only of dogma or of ethics, but of its basis in the New Testament, of its prefiguring in the Old, or of its exemplification in the lives of the saints. Yet however named, the personages were in all cases strictly dramatic, and equally so in all, since they were conceived from the first as parts of a dramatic whole. This whole controlled their functions, from it they drew their life, and their life was and is, to the spectator, a satisfactory one.

This then, in rough outline, is Mr. Parker's apparatus. He proceeds to apply it to three of the most popular *autos*. But first he takes the precaution of clearing out of the way a noisome, if obvious, red herring. 'Calderón is no theologian', or more frequently, 'no philosopher', say the Protestants; 'how can he be, if he is not original?' 'Calderón is a theologian of high quality', answer the Catholics, or words to that effect. But, Mr. Parker observes, 'his *autos* cannot tell us whether he deserves to be considered as a philosopher or not'. He offers himself, not as such, but as a teacher, whose chosen medium is the drama: it is the drama alone which concerns the critic. Since this contains, as one of its elements, theology of a certain kind, this must first be understood; but whether or not the critic goes further and approves the theology is his own affair. If he does so, then presumably he will enjoy the drama more fully; but without understanding it, he will not be entitled even to dismiss the drama. The value of a manuscript cannot be judged until it has been deciphered.

The *autos* Mr. Parker analyses are *El Gran Teatro del Mundo*, *La Cena de Baltasar* and *La Vida es Sueno*. Of these, *El Gran*

Teatro is the most straightforward. It is based on the metaphor of life as a play—a metaphor familiar and simple enough, though not, as Mr. Parker points out, beyond all misinterpretation. Nevertheless, as Calderón presents it, it can be left to do its own work. Accordingly, the verse is 'kept on a consistent level of bare simplicity': it is transparent and, in the endeavour to avoid all obstacle to immediate vision, even diffuse. The *auto* chooses rather to condole with human suffering than to castigate its causes; the latter being satirized in terms so general, that they affect alike both king and peasant. Mr. Parker draws an effective contrast between the verse of *El Gran Teatro* and the terse lines of *No hay más Fortuna que Dios*, a work treating of the same theme, but more severely. *La Cena de Baltasar*, on the other hand, is an *auto* of the most complicated kind. Its protagonist is not only the Belshazzar King of Babylon who profaned the sacred vessels of the Hebrews; he symbolizes not only a sacrilegious communicant who, as such, commits a greater profanation; he symbolizes also every man who, preferring chaos to order, brings about his own destruction. Calderón sets such a man against the background of the flood, the supreme example of disorder in the physical world. Belshazzar exults in the prospect of a disorder of similar magnitude, desiring for himself the glory of bringing it about. His vanity will exalt him to the skies; his idolatry will bring worship down from heaven. The light of the sun, which is a natural light, will be eclipsed by that of vanity; and natural darkness will be scattered by the tapers of idolatry. To represent a moral and physical confusion so deeply confounded, to convey at once the madness of it and the fascination it can exert over the human spirit, Calderón, abandoning simplicity of diction, draws on all the resources of the *culto* style: its double meanings, its varied figures, its extravagant comparisons, its tortured constructions. In this he is an acknowledged master; so that the conclusion to which he leads the *auto* is made to appear the inevitable conclusion. Belshazzar, preparing a life-giving feast as the Mass is, finds it instead a feast of death; he accepts at the hands of Death a cup of wine which, instead of fortifying, kills him. Mr. Parker's treatment of *La Cena de Baltasar* is perhaps the finest passage in his book; the reader gains the impression that the *auto* has never been read before—certainly, it has never before been discussed in this way. *La Vida es Sueno*, the third example for study, contrasts with the other two in that, while complicated in *argomento* like *La Cena*, it is simple in diction like *El Gran Teatro*. As a consequence is makes a 'predominantly abstract' impression, and Mr. Parker does not, in fact, consider it by any means the best on its theme. He has chosen it because it is available in a modern edition, and because its title, identical with that of a famous *comedia*, keeps it before everybody's mind.

The reader will rise from Mr. Parker's book anxious that he should write another dealing with some of Calderón's later masterpieces, and should perhaps publish the text of these. On general grounds, it would seem absurd that an *auto* such as, say, *El Nuevo*

Hospicio de los Pobres should remain buried between the covers of eighteenth-century volumes difficult to obtain at the booksellers. But even so, the reader will have obtained from this first book of Mr. Parker's a stimulus to start exploring on his own account, and ideas such as to make the exploration profitable. I will mention only one more of these. One of the most remarkable and original developments of the *auto*, says Mr. Parker, is that in which a person is brought upon the stage who is at once a partner in the action and the cause of it. As always, the action is conceptual; but the concepts are the concepts of this person. So Apostasy, say, can be shown working out the consequences of her abandonment of the faith and (so to speak) in spite of herself being reconciled to it; or Sin casting about for devices with which to thwart Redemption and herself, do what she may, being thwarted. By this means the *auto*, already almost inconceivably rich in content, is made yet richer: to the reality of the allegory and that of the concepts is added a third, that of the thinker of the concepts.

To students of English as distinct from Spanish literature Mr. Parker's book, it seems to me, should be of the greatest service. The deep influence of the morality on Elizabethan drama is now generally recognized, and the *auto* offers us the one European example of the morality form consciously developed by an artist of prime genius. Since the laying aside of character, English dramatic criticism has not found itself very well off for instruments. Bibliography, convention, imagery are good so far as they go, but they do not go far. Amongst Mr. Parker's wide range, some quite effective ones are to be had for the looking.

JAMES SMITH.

CRITICAL ESSAYS, by George Orwell (*Secker and Warburg*, 8/6).

It is both agreeable and useful to have these essays of Mr. Orwell's under one cover, and most refreshing to read plain, sensible non-partisan writing about books and society without feeling queasily certain, as one finishes the first paragraph, that one knows all too well what the last one will contain. Not that Mr. Orwell is *au dessus de la mêlée*. He is in the arena all right, and battling too probably; but he is putting up a one-man show, and not crawling round beneath a party-coloured shield. A special and nowadays unusual virtue is that he judges things according to what he thinks is right or wrong, not according to their particular ideological manner.

The sort of position taken up by Mr. Orwell is exemplified in these quotations from the essay on Dali:

> 'If you say that Dali, though a brilliant draughtsman, is a dirty little scoundrel, you are looked upon as a savage . . . Since "Mannequin rotting in a taxicab" is a good composition

(as it undoubtedly is), it cannot be a disgusting, degrading picture; whereas Noyes, Elton, etc., would tell you that because it is disgusting it cannot be a good composition. And between these two fallacies there is no middle position; or rather, there is a middle position, but we seldom hear much about it'.

He goes on to conclude that Dali

'is a symptom of the world's illness. The important thing is not to denounce him as a cad who ought to be horsewhipped, or to defend him as a genius who ought not to be questioned, but to find out *why* he exhibits that particular set of aberrations'.

To find out *why*—that is Mr. Orwell's main preoccupation. His equipment includes a varied first-hand experience of life at many social levels and the eye of a shrewd dispassionate anthropologist. His essays on Boys' Weeklies, comic postcards, and P. G. Wodehouse show him at his best. As far as horse-sense, honesty, and wide, unsectarian interests in economics and social relationships will lead him, he will go, and he is well worth following. His main limitation—which can be seen by comparing his work with Edmund Wilson's best essays—is a certain bluntness of sensibility. He will attempt an answer to the question 'Why is Dickens's work what it is?' but sheers off from the equally relevant question 'Why do I like Dickens?' by saying 'As a rule an aesthetic preference is either something inexplicable or it is so corrupted by non-aesthetic motives as to make one wonder whether the whole of literary criticism is not a huge network of humbug'. Now the point is, surely, that an aesthetic preference is something which is extraordinarily difficult to explain, but the explanation is even more worth attempting than any examination however relevant, of backgrounds, historical, psychological or economic. But when all reservations are made, this remains a book to be read.

T. R. Barnes.

SCRUTINY is published by the Editors, Downing College, Cambridge; distributed by Deighton, Bell & Co., Ltd., Trinity Street, Cambridge; and printed by S. G. Marshall & Son, Round Church Street, Cambridge, England.